

All my Names



Jan Hansi João Jochanan

ALL MY NAMES

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The information below is just out of curiosity – not a comparison:

Goethe took 57 years to write *Faust* (1773-1830)

It took Dante Alighieri 13 years to write *Divine Comedy* (1308-1321)

Jorge Amado, at the age of 25, wrote *Capitães da Areia* in one year (1937)

Shakespeare wrote two plays a year – *Hamlet* was created between (1599 and 1601)

Dostoevsky took a year and a half writing *Crime and Punishment* (1866/7)

Jochanan Dekel completed *All My Names* in three years (2020-2023)

Dedication

This story is dedicated to Hermann and Bertha Lerner
and Karl and Gisela Drucker, my grandparents.

I am sure they would have liked to know how it all developed...



*My Grandmother Bertha, my mother
and my sister*



*My grandfather Karl Drucker
and myself*

Prologue



Dear Reader,

If you are part of the Drucker, Dekel, Shalit, or Ortega families, then this story belongs to you. If you are a friend or just a curious person, I hope you enjoy reading it and that it leaves you with a good feeling, and maybe also with some thoughts ...

Hans (Hansi), Jan (Janush), Jean, Joao, Jochanan, Juan, and even John — they are all me. (Jony)

Strangely, my name changed wherever I went. I was always a bit jealous of my dear sister Marietta because her name never changed. I called her Marietata sometime just to provoke her.

This short book is not intended to be a historical or a “Cosmic” document. It is an account of a man’s life — my life.

Life is an unbelievable present — it is fantastic, can be happy, challenging, have good and bad times, and can sometimes be cruel — but always an incredible adventure.

Thank you: Destiny, God, Stars, Luck, my parents — or whatever force gave me this adventure. I never took it for granted, but I know that the outcome didn’t

always depend on me. Circumstances, luck (maybe the position of the stars and the moon), friends I made along the way, my family, and acquaintances all had a great influence on my life.

I was born in 1931 and now in 2023 (being 91 years “young” and still thinking normally); when I look back, I am immensely thankful for the present I was granted and the adventures I have experienced.

I am intelligent and imaginative enough to understand what can happen in a lifetime, and I am very happy, proud, and thankful that when I look at my family, and although we may be a very small “fish” in a huge ocean, we enjoy a good and satisfying life.

Firstly, I would like to thank my parents, who showed me what love is, my mother, Elisa, who taught me humor and how to be happy, and for her insisting that I learn languages — a fact that became so important in my life; my father, Rudi, who showed me honesty and dignity, discipline and how to obey if necessary. I am happy to have a wonderful sister, Marietta, who has always been an important part of my life.

There were other people who influenced me and made my life as it is today. I am speaking of those who had a direct influence on me — not historical events.

In school, Vittorio Corinaldi and Oswaldo Wolff (nagging me about my ignorance of actual Jewish life); in the youth movement Dror; Dov Tsamir (Bernardo Cymeryng) to whom I owe my decision to move to Israel making my life incredibly more interesting and fuller; to Shalom Dror for integrating me into Keren Hayesod; to George and Livia Bleier for becoming such incredible friends and to André Bollag for a thousand reasons.

I would like to mention more friends as every one of them touched me in some way, Ervin Semmel (my closest friend), Mitsi; Arik Ravon; Efrat & Yosi Aroch; Jaffa & Vittorio Corinaldi; Erica & Oswaldo Wolff; Rina & Samario Chaitchik; Flor & José Paulo Schivartche; Shaul Ravid; Graciela & Victor Gorenstein; Fiszal & Rosa Czeresnia; Mimi & Itzhak Moses; Motke Golan; Pola & Reuven Agassi and my apologies for others that ‘at my young age’ I may not have remembered to include.

Over the years, two babies transformed into wonderful adults showing me what life really is; Iris and Yaron, our children, and now we have gained Omri and Sarina, meaning that I have four children and five wonderful grandchildren — each one an incredible blessing; Yaara, Itay, Yotam, Ely and Noam. Luckily, Nikita has now been added to this bunch. There are other friends, masculine and feminine, who influenced my life but for “good” reasons am unable to mention them.

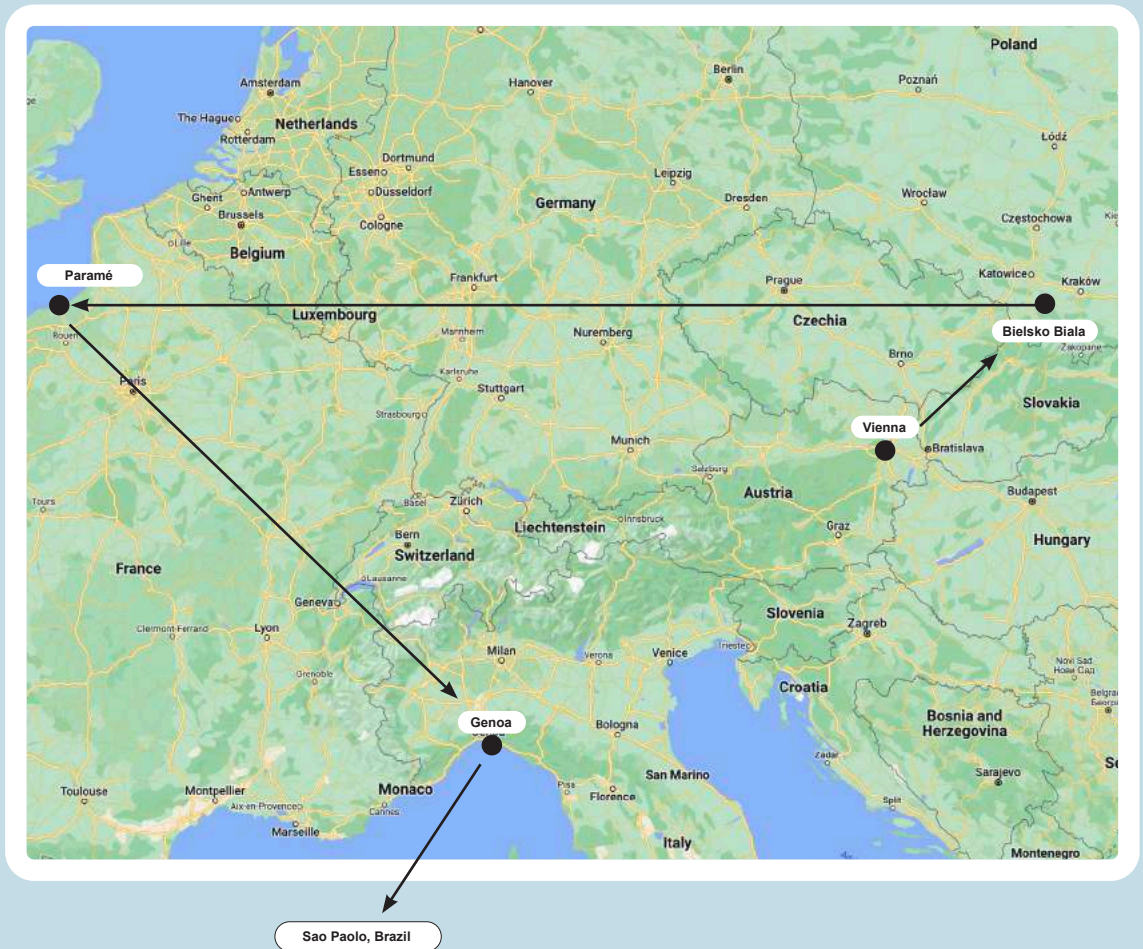
There are three more close friends I want to thank.

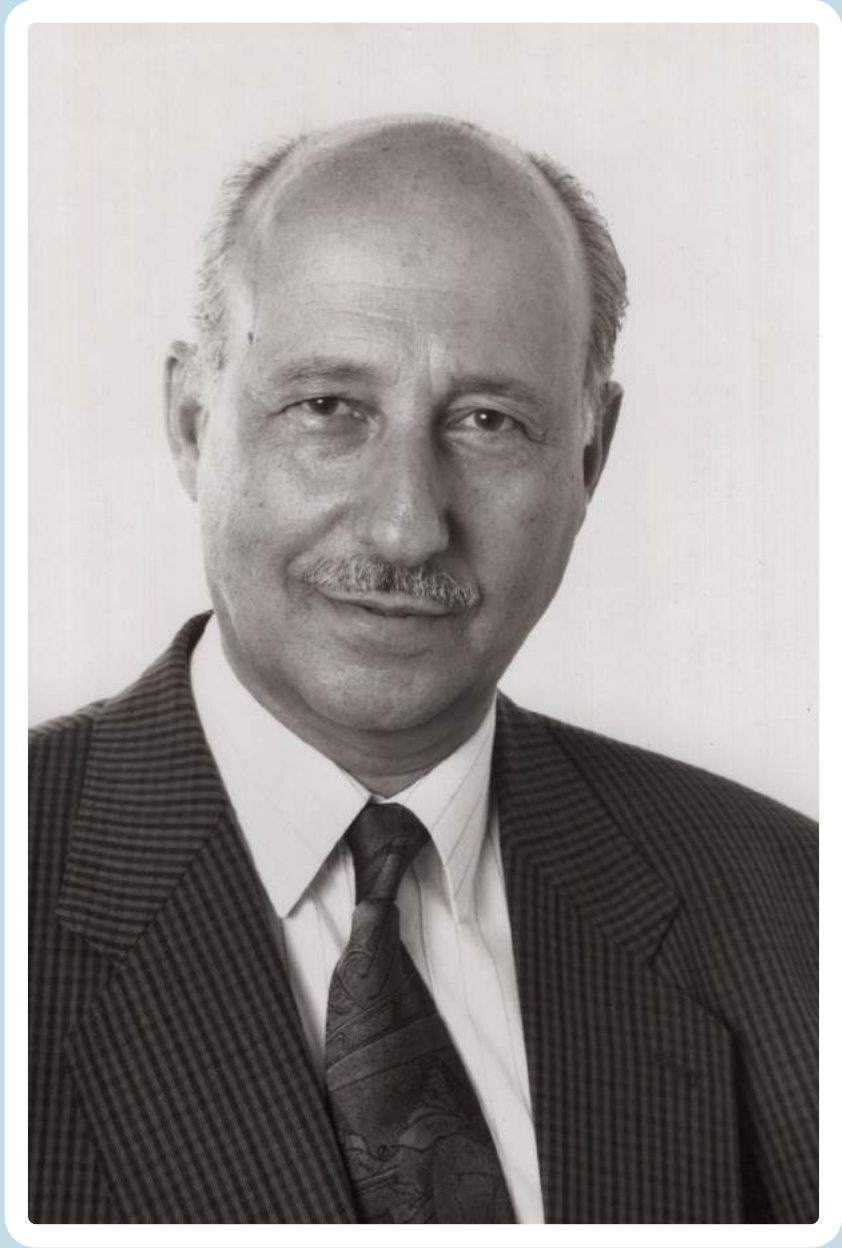
- Brazil — this marvelous place, with beautiful, warm, human, and friendly people
- Books — outstanding company: Monteiro Lobato and Karl May when I was young, George Amado, John dos Passos, Romain Rolland, Marx, and Young when I was growing up, and John le Carré, Goethe, Amos Oz, and Yuval Noah Harari as an adult.
- Music — without it, the world is empty; Samba, Tico Tico, Beatles, Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt, and a thousand others.

After more than 56 years, I am still unable to explain to myself what happened on Mount Massada, when during a talk about traveling to Brazil, I asked a young girl to join me, and she said it was impossible... and then the luckiest and most exhilarating moment of my life happened when I said, “so marry me.” Until today I am still surprised that this wonderful young woman, Carmela, agreed. And what an amazing influence she has been on my life.



Our Route from Europe to Brazil





The author, 1993

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All journeys have secret destinations
of which the traveler is unaware.

Martin Buber



Introduction

I was born in Vienna, Austria, and lived in Bielsko-Poland for eight years, followed by a year in Paramé, France. I arrived in São Paulo, Brazil, at the age of nine.

If, on my arrival, somebody, a person, a prophet or a visionary — would have told me that one day I would enter the esteemed Politécnica (University of São Paulo); leave my studies after one year in order to go to Israel (at that time still British Palestine); that I would live and work for ten years in a totally collective environment (a kibbutz); that I would leave it with no money or profession; that I would find an excellent job during a Brazilian Military Revolution; that I would find my BIGGEST happiness on the top of the mountain at Massada; that I would be lucky to join a worldwide Jewish Zionist institution and work there for 30 years; that I would become a globetrotter and live in various countries; that I would come to know and meet Edmond Safra; Baron David de Rothschild; Ignatz Bubis; Tito Sasson; Henry Sobel; Beno Milnitzky; Leon Feffer and other world renowned Jewish leaders and also some of the great Israeli personalities such as: Yosef Burg; Shimon Peres; Teddy Kolek; Arik Sharon; Michal Modai; Yaakov Gilead; Avraham Avi-hai; Shlomo Hillel and leaders of youth movements, such as Mussa Harif; Eli Goren, Moggi Margalit, Dov Tsamir (my mentor) and many others, I would NEVER have believed it. In fact, I probably would have laughed and carried on playing Monopoly with my friends.

I did not change history. I did not declare India's independence or even Israel's. I lived my life in the best way I could. I feel that I have enjoyed a very full and rich life. I am just one among billions, it's true, but I'm a lucky one. I don't think I was ever too modest or too proud. I just tried to be a good and positive human being. It wasn't always easy, but from a certain age, I had a direction and a purpose. I might not always have had absolute success, but certainly a relatively good one.

I have always held strong moral and personal principles and always remained true to myself. I did it my way (Frank Sinatra) and am proud of the life I led and of what I achieved.

This book is not intended to be philosophical or a lesson about how to live. But maybe it shows that you do not have to be a Gandhi or a Ben Gurion to be a person who leaves a valuable footprint in this world.

Hans/Jan/Jean/Joao/Jochanan/Juan/John/Jony
Drucker/Dar/Dekel.



Our home today



Our house in Bielsko, 1933



Marietta and I



My mother, my sister and baby J

I'm not my name.

My name is something I wear, like a shirt.

It gets worn. I outgrow it, I change it.

Jerry Spinelli

Hans Hermann Drucker – The Early Years

Throughout my life, I have had to answer to several different names – in fact, a different name for every place that I lived. When I was born, my parents called me Hansi, but later on in Poland, I became Jan, which changed to Jean in France. During my years in Brazil, I was João, and in Israel, I am Jochanan. I was always envious of my wonderful sister Marietta whose name never changed regardless of where we were living.

I was born on June 29th, 1931, in a hospital in Vienna. Although my sister had been born in Poland in 1927, where my parents were living, when the time came close to my delivery, they didn't have confidence in any of the local hospitals. Therefore, my parents traveled especially to Vienna in order for "this super special person" to be born in a reputable hospital.

I am not sure where the origin of my name came from, but my maternal grandfather, who had passed away, was called Hermann, and I received his name. I have always been very proud of that. My birthday is also the holy day of Saint Peter and Paul, the 31st bishop and first archbishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Caceres. After my birth was announced, my mother received telegrams, presents, and flowers with messages that said, "Congratulations on the arrival of little Peter" or "Congratulations on the birth of little Paul." However, my parents decided to call me Hans, and I never asked why that was the name they had chosen – it seems they liked it.

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My mother, Elisa, was a very beautiful woman. She was born in Silesia, Poland, on April 26th, 1900, to Hermann and Bertha Lerner. They had both been born in Austria, growing up with German as their mother tongue. Tragically my grandfather died when my mother was only 16 years old, so I didn't ever meet him, but I knew my grandmother.

I believe that my great grandfather (Hermann's father) was religious and held a position in the synagogue, possibly as Gabai, but I'm not sure of the exact details. Later the family became more secular and managed a carpet shop selling original Persian carpets, making a comfortable living. The shop was in Bielitz Biala, which until 1918 was in Austria, although today it is a city in southern Poland: Bielsko. After her husband passed away, Bertha continued to run the shop with her son (my mother's brother) Fritz who was a couple of years older. My uncle Fritz was quite different from his sister. He had a "Bon Vivant" personality, was adventurous and a known womanizer who enjoyed the good life.

When it came to religion, my mother was far from orthodox, but she liked to read a special prayer book she received from her mother on Friday evening and then afterwards light the Shabbat candles. She cooked and traveled on Shabbat; she didn't keep kosher, but she would never sew on a Friday night or on Saturday. I once attended a talk given by Yeshayahu Leibowitz (1903-1994), one of the religious premier intellectuals of Israeli life with controversial views on Zionism and the State. I remember during his lecture he said: "You don't know how many ways there are to be Jewish. You can be super-orthodox and do a hundred things. You can be Jewish just by being a little orthodox. You can be Jewish in a thousand ways." This is the way my mother was Jewish; she prayed, lit candles, cooked, and traveled but would never sew on Shabbat.

My mother went to study at an Austrian university – I think literature and history, although I am not sure. She also enjoyed playing tennis and was a good player. In fact, my parents met in Bielsko through playing tennis. I don't know the details, but it was not an arranged shidduch at all, and they continued to play together. During the time that they were active, sport was very important in German and Austrian education, with tennis being considered a sport for the higher society.

My parents married on May 24th, 1924, when Elisa was 24 and my father was 29, in Bielsko in an official Jewish ceremony and remained very close all through their lives. I have letters that my mother sent my father 50 years after they married, saying: "You were my love in the past. You are my love now. You will be my love forever. I love you, and I will always love you." They had been married for 52 years when she died and enjoyed a super romantic affair all through their years together. My father wrote poems to my mother, and in 1951 he wrote: "I never regret. We are riding horses together. You are on the horse near me. We want to go fishing and to be happy. As it was in old age. From your love from the beginning for a very long and happy time, I went with you. I never regret."

By the time the first World War ended in 1918, Bielsko had become part of Poland, and everybody had to speak Polish. It was a different country, but nothing huge took place, it was still the same city, people went on living in the same houses and going to the same places of work. Schools saw a big change, though, as now everybody had to speak, teach, and learn in Polish. People carried on speaking German in shops, except for the Post Office, where Polish became the official language.

My father, Rudolf (Rudi) Drucker, was born in Jegendorf, Silesia, on September 18th, 1895, to Karl and Gisela, the eldest son with two younger brothers, Otto and Paul, and a sister, Any. I have never been able to find out where the name Drucker originated from, although I have searched but haven't been able to find other related families with the same name. My two uncles both studied and went to work with their father in the factory. Sadly, they were both murdered in the Holocaust.

My grandfather had a textile factory that he built up himself called "Karl Drucker und Söhne." He was a very successful, energetic man and adored me. I was the oldest grandson, and we loved spending time together. I can still remember visiting him in his factory at the age of 6 or 7, knowing he would have a stock of chocolate waiting. I also always received a coin to put into my piggy bank with the understanding that I would save up to buy a car. I had to promise him that I would never ride a motorcycle as it was too dangerous. Another treasured memory of my grandfather is taking walks with him at weekends in the local woods. (See photo on Page 1).

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I don't, however, have many memories of my grandmother Gisela, except that she was a nice, kind woman who looked after the household. The family had become very assimilated into their society and were comfortably off. My paternal grandparent's mother tongue was German, although they also spoke Polish, but not Yiddish, and didn't even like to hear it. They considered Yiddish to be offensive and an insult to the German language. They also regarded Ost-Juden (Jews of Eastern European origin) a little offensive, as did my mother's family.

My father was an intelligent and enterprising man who at the age of 20, like many of his generation, joined Emperor Franz Joseph's army, serving as an officer of artillery during the horrendous First World War (1914-1918). He liked to tell two stories relating to his time in the army. The first one is that he and another nine soldiers were pushing a canon up a small mountain. It was raining at the time, and so the ground soon became muddy. Each one of them thought the other eight guys were being strong so that they didn't have to put so much effort into the job and take it a bit easy. However, when they all stopped pushing as hard as they should, the canon, instead of going up, suddenly started coming back down towards them. My father, who was the officer in charge, shouted at them to start pushing properly, and eventually, the canon started going back up again. He said he was angry about it, but when I think about it now, it was quite a ridiculous event but provided a good life lesson.

The other very special story was about his closest friend, Willy Borger. He wasn't an officer, but he and my father shared a tent and were designated to be night guards. When my father was on the early morning shift, for instance, 1 to 3 in the morning, he came back to the tent at 3 o'clock, woke Willy up, and told him: "It's your turn to go now. I'm going to sleep. You have to guard from 3 to 5." Willy said: "I am not going. I want to sleep," to which my father replied: "That's ridiculous. You have to go." However, as my father was settling down, he saw that Willy wasn't getting up. This was a very serious offense — they were at war, and he knew that if it came to light the next day that Willy had disobeyed orders, he would be court-martialed. So, my father got up and did another two hours guard duty. Despite this, Willy remained a fantastic friend whom I knew and liked. He came to Brazil before us, and this story always stayed in the family.

After Austria lost the war, my father went to study in Salzburg, Austria, qualified as a textile engineer, and joined my grandfather in the factory. However, there wasn't enough work there to support four families, so he teamed up with two other partners to start their own very large textile factory in Bielsko, called "Landesman & Kornhaber." Although they were in partnership, my father didn't add his name. I have all the papers relating to their factory, and we tried to receive compensation from the German government after WWII (1939-1945), but we weren't successful.

Once the First World War was over, the Austrian Empire was divided, but nothing major changed; my parents were now living in Poland, and Bielitz became Bielsko. The city was known as a textile center, with about 400 people employed in my father's factory. We were very well off and employed about seven or eight staff in our household; a driver for my father; a butler; a cook; a cleaner; a gardener, and a nanny for each child. There was another lady who took care of all of them, who was the only person my mother had contact with. She relayed all her instructions through that lady, such as saying: "Tonight we have two couples coming for dinner. I want that soup," etc., etc., and everything was prepared accordingly. The Second World War ended all of this, and we lost everything.

I left Poland when I was only eight years old, so I don't have many memories of our life there. One thing I do recall is a nice bridge from where you could see the whole city, including my grandfather's factory, which always impressed me. I don't have any memories of my childhood home, other than it was in a very nice street, and we had a large back garden, almost the size of a small park. There were three families living there, but the house belonged to us, and we lived in the central part.

I attended a Polish-speaking school, and at that time, I spoke both German and Polish. However, my Polish was only from one school year, and after we left, growing up in a German-speaking home, I soon forgot it. I believe that my mother never gave great value to Polish, although she did have high regard for French, English, and German. Apart from the schools, the whole city at that time remained German speaking. Today Bielsko is totally Polish.

Another memory I have of my early years in Poland is about my aunt, Uncle Fritz's wife. She was a child physiotherapist, and we had to go there once or

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twice a week to do exercises with her. We had to move around the floor and follow all sorts of instructions — I hated it.

Uncle Fritz survived the war, but sadly his wife was murdered together with a group of Partisans. They had two daughters, Eva and Tamara. Eva is still living in Haifa. She has three children, all married with nice families. Tamara died in Brazil some years ago. Her two children are both still living there.

Eva and Tamara were saved by an Austrian-German non-Jewish woman who helped take care of them when they were babies. When their parents had to flee, she said: "You go. I will take care of the children." They were very young at the time, Eva, a year older than me, and Tamara, a couple of years younger. They had to move because she knew if they stayed in their home city, people would know that these girls are Jewish, and somebody might report them. They were doing well in their new place until one day, Eva went to buy bread and milk. She came back saying: "Tetta, I met 'that and that' man who knows us from Bielsko. He was so nice." Tetta immediately said: "Go to your room, take your valise, pack up everything. We are moving." She knew that if Eva had been recognized, he could tell the German authorities that he had seen Jewish girls. They moved two or three times during the war in order to stay safe.

Some years ago, Eva and I registered this special woman, who risked her life to save two Jewish children, at Yad Vashem, and we have a document naming her as a Righteous Among the Nations. Gisela, we called her Tetta, was a fantastic character, and after the war in 1946, my father brought my uncle, his two daughters, and Tetta to Brazil.

Before we left Poland in 1939, we didn't see any evidence of the Nazi party's impending impact. We had a radio at home, which was used mainly to play music by Beethoven, Mozart, Bach, Liszt, Chopin, and Mendelsohn, but we received very little information about what was going on.

As mentioned above, my father was a big industrialist and had made good friends in high places, many of them non-Jews. One day one of his contacts came to my father and told him: "I sent my wife (not Jewish) and my children to Warsaw." He went on to explain that because our city is very near the Czechoslovakian border where the Nazis had already taken occupation, Poland

HANS HERMANN DRUCKER - THE EARLY YEARS



My mother, sister and me



My father, sister and me



My sister and I



*My parents, cousin Eva, Uncle
Fritz and cousin Tamara –
Campos do Jordão, Brazil, 1947*

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would have border incidents with the Germans — there would be shootings, and it would become dangerous for us. Nobody in my family at that time could imagine a Holocaust, and this wasn't seen as being antisemitic but as a danger of living too near the border and being caught in the crossfire.

Nobody thought that the Germans would occupy Poland as they believed the Polish army to be very strong and would be able to defend their country. This government employee advised my father to also send his wife and children to Warsaw. This was in April 1939, just a few months before the outbreak of the Second World War. My father came home and said to my mother: "I would like you to take Marietta and Hansi to Warsaw." My mother said: "I don't like Warsaw. I'm not going to Warsaw. I cannot stand that city." Later on, I believed that she also didn't want to be near the Ost-Juden of that city, having to hear them speak Yiddish and see them sporting their "paiyot." I heard them arguing about this, and eventually my mother said: "If you think I have to leave, I will go to France."

My parents had traveled quite a lot during their marriage to several European countries, and my mother spoke English and a little French. We have photos of a special trip they took on the Orient Express, traveling to Istanbul, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Cairo. This middle east trip had unbelievable value in the future due to three pieces of land my father bought in British Palestine while on the ship in Haifa on their way back from Cairo.

My father agreed about us going to France, but he didn't want us to be alone and so he decided to ask my mother's cousin Tante Irma, a widow with no children, to come with us. They didn't explain to us children what was happening, and the only other time I had been away from home was when we had gone skiing in the mountains in Zakopane. Our belongings were packed up for us, and we left our home in Poland sometime in May 1939. My mother owned some very nice jewelry and beautiful fur coats, but just chose a few pieces of jewelry and one older fur coat to take with. The other items stayed at home, with no one imagining that it would all be occupied by the horrendous Gestapo.

The original plan was that we would be away for a few weeks, a month at the most, but of course, we never went back. I don't remember much about the

journey or even about saying goodbye to my father, who stayed behind, but I do have some memories of living in France, which wasn't a good period in my life.

The next time the four of us were together as a family was in February 1940, when we were reunited in Brazil.



A journey of a thousand miles
begins with a single step

Lao Tzu

A Miracle – Surviving

I don't actually remember the journey to France, but I am sure that we traveled there by train. I think we had about eight or nine suitcases, although we didn't expect to be away for more than a month. My parents had arranged somewhere for us to stay in Paramé on the north coast of Brittany, near St. Malo. It was a nice place, and we rented a three-room apartment there.

I had to start learning again, so my mother sent my sister and me to a school where nuns taught us. My mother told them that we were Jewish, but there wasn't a Jewish problem then, and I don't believe they would have cared in any case. Some funny incidents occurred there though, particularly when the nuns gave us instructions to pray before all our meals and before going to sleep. Our mother had to explain to us that we didn't have to do that.

It was a good school, and I am reasonably smart, but I wasn't a particularly good student at that time as I was preoccupied with other thoughts. My sister, however, was always a good student, and after some time, she came home from school with a badge as a reward for excellent work. I liked the look of that and decided that I wanted one as well. My mother, Tante Irma, and Marietta all began to laugh because they didn't think I was good enough to earn one. However, after one month, I too, was awarded the badge – I had the ambition and worked hard to achieve it.

I also remember some days we would go to the seaside and play on the beach. I used to enjoy watching the thousands of small crabs running around, making holes in the sand, and then disappearing. I couldn't swim at the time, only learning when I was about 13 or 14.

Something else that stuck in my memory was the vast variation between the low and the high tides. The difference was huge, probably four or five meters. There was a wall, maybe seven or eight meters high, for protection, as the waves came up so far. If you were walking along the street near the sea at high tide, you would get completely soaked. Even one street back from the coast, as the houses were only three floors tall, you would still get very wet. It became really dangerous when it was high tide, and we made sure not to walk there during those times.

While we did have some enjoyable times, I was also aware of a lot of tension at home. My mother and aunt listened to the radio following the news and knew that there was a war going on. My father was in Finland, the rest of my mother's family was in Poland, and we were here alone in France. The whole situation made my mother terribly nervous, as no one had any idea what was going to happen.

Nobody spoke to me about what was going on, but I could sense the tension around me, which resulted in my experiencing terrible nightmares. One of them was that we were taking a bath, and a horrible creature came out of the toilet bowl. He attacked Tante Irma and put her in a bottle, which exploded with her in it. Another one was when I was on a school excursion up a mountain, and suddenly we heard the devil coming in our direction from above. Everybody is running, including me. There is a very high place, but there is no way out. Somehow, I manage to get hold of a tree and climb down. The devil is coming after us — at some point, I fall and find myself awake in my bed. I don't know how I had the courage to raise a finger, to check that there is a cover over me. Once I know that I am covered, it means that I am alive.

After that, before I went to sleep, in order to avoid the nightmares (I called them the Mary's), I asked my mother to bring a piece of cloth to wipe over my bed. It felt as if there were ghosts, and I needed to have the area cleaned to stop them from appearing. I remember this well but never found out what my sister thought. We shared a room at the time, and I imagine she felt the tension as much as I did. By the time we arrived in Brazil, my nightmares had stopped.



My mother



Jean in Paramé



Marietta and me (seated), Paramé



The three of us in France, 23 September 1939

There were no telephones available and so the only means of communication between my parents was by mail. There was already censorship, and so they wrote in French, making sure they chose their words very carefully. I also added a few lines to some of the letters.

I'm not sure what my mother did during the day whilst we were at school, but I do know that she suffered a lot from sinusitis, although nobody knew what it was. She had severe pains and went to a dentist in Paris, but it didn't help. There were no antibiotics available in those days, and although everybody thought it was a problem with her teeth, whatever treatment she received from the dentist didn't help. She lost some good teeth by error. It was only much later, when she was diagnosed correctly and received the proper treatment, that she got relief.

One day I had terrible pains in my stomach. My mother called a doctor, who told her to "put a hot water bottle on him and give him a purgative." My mother didn't do that, though, as she once had a cousin who had died from appendicitis, and a doctor in Poland had told my mother that it is dangerous to do what the French doctor had suggested. The next day I had a fever, so she took me to the hospital in St. Malo. Once there, the doctor immediately diagnosed appendicitis, saying that I had to be operated on straight away. There was an older doctor there, and my mother noticed that his hand was trembling. Naturally, she got a fright thinking that this trembling man was going to operate on her son! Then the nurse told her: "Mrs. Drucker, don't worry. The moment his hand holds a scalpel, it stops, and he is fantastic. He used to be our chief doctor. Today, the chief doctor is his son. But he was called to the army, so now this is our chief doctor again. Don't worry." This doctor examined me and said, "I will make a very small cut." He did so, took out the appendix, and showed it to my mother. He put a little pressure on the tube, and it exploded, pouring out all the pus, and told my mother: "If this had happened inside, he would be dead," as at that time, they couldn't treat infections as they can today. Although Penicillin, the first antibiotic, was discovered by Alexander Fleming in 1929, its true potential was only developed some years later, and it wasn't until about 1944 that the medicine was given to patients.

I had to stay in hospital for about a week, but after some days, the small cut that the surgeon made became bigger because I wasn't able to lay still. I definitely

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owe my life to my mother as she made the right decision for me, although I didn't really appreciate how lucky I had been until I was an adult.

We lived in Paramé for almost a year until February 1940. In 1939 France and England had both formally declared war against Germany. The British bombarded the Germans and the Germans bombarded England, and ships were sunk all around. The famous U-boat, the German submarine, also destroyed commercial boats. France did nothing, and there were no signs of war. The French were sure that the Maginot line, designed to stop any future invasion by Germany after WWI, would defend them forever. They never dreamed that the Germans would occupy Holland and Belgium and attack from the back. France was destroyed in a few weeks.

Italy at the time was also not in the war, and in February 1940, we took the train from France to Italy and then sailed from Italy to Brazil.

I learned later that my father had taken a boat from Finland, probably in November 1939, via the United States, to Brazil. He was anxious to leave Europe, although money was now becoming a problem. Most of his assets had remained in Poland, only to disappear completely later on. He had some money left, and luck helped him out too. His friend, Willy Borger (the one who refused to guard at night), had gone to Brazil years earlier. Among other activities, Willy also sold material from my father's factory and had made some money from the sales.

There were two demands made by the Brazilian authority before issuing an entry visa. One was that you pay US\$1000, a huge sum of money in 1939, and the other that you had a profession that would be of use there. My father was a young textile engineer, and as the textile industry in Brazil was the biggest industry, especially in São Paulo at that time, he was granted an entry visa. My father hadn't intended to go to Brazil, he really wanted to go to the United States as almost every Jew wanted during that period, but he didn't have any connections in America who could arrange a visa for him. So, that was how we ended up in Brazil.

When my father was sailing my mother knew the name of the boat he was on and every night she listened on the radio to the names of the vessels destroyed by the Germans. This led to a huge amount of tension and stress in our small

A MIRACLE - SURVIVING

apartment, although as a young child, I wasn't aware of everything that was going on. When my father eventually arrived in Brazil, in São Paulo, he arranged tickets and visas for my mother and us. My mother had to go every day to Paris to arrange the papers that would allow us to leave France and travel to Genoa port to reach the ship "Neptunia" heading for Brazil. We didn't know much more except that we were on our way to Brazil, and I certainly didn't feel we were in any danger. Possibly my sister, at 12, had a better understanding of our situation, and maybe my mother explained more to her. I still don't know today if the fact that Jews were being persecuted left a mark on her — I know that at the time, I wasn't aware of it.

Sailing on the Neptunia, an Italian ship, was a fantastic experience. There were many immigrants like us aboard, and we enjoyed good conditions and several parties, the biggest one being when we crossed the Equator. I still have the certificate we received commemorating the event.

I arrived in Brazil and became João Drucker — the third time in my life that I changed my name.



My cousins Eva and Tamara Lerner

Nobody can go back and start a new beginning,
but anyone can start today and make a new ending.

Maria Robinson

BRAZIL – The Beginning

The voyage lasted a month, we had a comfortable cabin and were given good food. We landed in Santos, the port in São Paulo, and although I don't remember I imagine that my father was there waiting for us.

We were booked into a boarding house, “Augusta” that was especially for people, like us, that is immigrants from Europe, and we were well taken care of, receiving three meals a day and comfortable lodgings. We stayed there for about 6 months.

After a short time, I was enrolled in school, the Liceu Franco Brasileiro, which today is known as Liceu Pasteur. It's a French-Brazilian school, with Portuguese being the main language and parallel classes being held in French. Once again, I was in a situation where I had to get used to a new language.

My mother always told us that languages are very important, and that is certainly one of the invaluable resources I had throughout my life (seven languages). She was a very cultivated, intelligent woman, had traveled a lot and could talk about many different subjects such as music, philosophy, and literature. It was important to her that we kept our French, so, Marietta and I had French lessons once a week for about three years. We continued to speak German at home.

There were many new things to learn in our new country, one of them had to do with the different food we were served. One day at lunch – still at the Augusta boarding house – there was soup, meat and a dessert that was green with a small

red cherry in the middle. Mother straight away told us, “Don’t touch it — it looks dangerous. You can’t eat it.” I looked around and saw that everybody is eating it and looking as if they are enjoying it. I understood that we were forbidden to eat it and wondered to myself if these people are going to die! After a few weeks somebody told my mother: “This is not poison. This is a very good fruit.” Later on, we found out that it was a fantastic dish. The Brazilians eat avocado with sugar and lemon, and I still love it today. From time to time, I buy four or five avocados and we make it here. I was the only one who ate it until Dhanya, Carmela’s caregiver, an Indian nurse, came to live with us, and joined me as she was used to the same dish in India.

The school that I was sent to was quite far from our boarding house, but my parents chose it because they were waiting for a house in that area. There was a street — Rua Dona Berta — where three or four Jewish families already lived, and we eventually moved to a town house in the same row. It was rented, with two floors, three bedrooms, and was very well designed. The architect, Gregori Warchavchik, a Jew, won both Brazilian and international prizes for his architectural talent.

So, our life continued — I remember my father coming with me to a park, not far from the boarding house, where we used to play football, hide-and-seek, and other games.

After moving to Rua Berta there was an empty plot in front of our house, later they built on it, but until then we could have fun there running around and climbing trees. I used to play a lot on our street and on the empty lot — it was very different from today due to the “smartphone” and similar devices. We were luckier.

After some time, they began building on the empty plot and all the children, including me, went to play on the construction site. We also took away all the materials used to hold the windows in place. One afternoon Lasar Segal (a famous painter who lived on our street and was my parents’ friend) came to our house. He was holding a package and, understanding what it was about I wanted to disappear, but he called me, gave me the package, and said: “Look, here you have two kilos of window material. Please play with this and stop taking it from the building.” Lasar Segal was the owner of the new building, and we were delaying the work. I was very ashamed, but his behavior was outstanding.

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We had some contact with the Jewish community who helped everybody, and we managed as best we could. Although my parents kept up with the news as much as possible and were aware that there was a horrible tragedy developing in Europe we didn't know (and couldn't even imagine) all the details.

Later on, we learned that the first to die was my father's youngest brother Paul Drucker who was about 38. He was a soldier in the Polish army and was taken as a prisoner of war. The Germans separated Jews and non-Jews, confiscating boots from the Jewish prisoners providing them with wooden sandals instead. They didn't kill all of them yet, but they also didn't want to hold them, so instead they walked them from one area to another, asking the small Jewish communities to take some of the prisoners into their homes. The communities were poor, and there were very few families in a position to take in an extra person. Other than maybe two or three who were lucky enough to be given shelter, the others continued to walk. This was during October and November, which are cold and snowy winter months in Poland. When walking if a prisoner fell, they would be shot and killed immediately. My uncle Paul fell, and they shot him — maybe it was a better fate than to be burned in a crematorium.

During 1940 my father succeeded in arranging a trip for my maternal grandmother, Bertha Lerner to come and join us in Brazil. My father sent her a ticket and a visa, but she refused to come, saying she was too old, although she was probably only in her 60s. She didn't come, believing that we would return eventually. She also wrote saying that life is difficult, and she will have to burn some furniture due to the cold, but the war will finish soon. Then at some point there were no more letters — nothing. We assume that Bertha and my father's mother, Gisela, were probably sent to Auschwitz. My father's brother Otto, who was married and had three children, was the only one who came back from the war, and he took his family to Warsaw. We imagine that he was in the ghetto, although we don't know for sure. Uncle Paul's wife and two children also disappeared. After the war we understood that nobody survived — they were all MURDERED. The "lucky" ones were both my grandfathers who died natural deaths.

My father needed to make some money and tried to make his way in two different businesses — but neither went well. The first business he became involved with



Rosalía, me and some cats – São Paulo



Family in São Paulo

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was with a Brazilian, Flavio Solani — his wife's name was Regina. We had moved out of the boarding house by then and my father made an agreement with Solani, who understood about wood, that he would go for several hours, (8 or 10) into the Brazilian interior, to buy wood, possibly some trees, and bring whatever he finds back to São Paulo. There it would be cut and sold at a good profit. My father financed the project with the little money he had left but it went wrong. It turned out that Flavio was a fraud. He didn't spend days or even hours going into the interior. Instead, he traveled for three or four hours with a girlfriend, stayed in a motel, used the telephone to buy the wood, brought it back to São Paulo, and said: "Okay, I bought it." Obviously, the price was already much higher and so there was no profit.

This guy was also a pilot and invited us to see his plane and watch him fly. My father, Rudi, my mother, Elisa, my sister Marietta, and me, Joãozinho (meaning small), all went to the airport to see the plane and to watch Flavio fly. My parents were new in Brazil and keen to see new things and have different experiences. Flavio showed us his plane, and said to my sister: "Come in. I will show you how the machine works." My sister got into the plane, and obviously, I followed. I was much too curious to only let my sister see what was inside. Flavio closed the door, started the motor, and flew away. My parents were on the ground watching and thinking, "Our two children are up there in the air." At that time, my father didn't know that Flavio was dishonest, but even so, to have his young children flying in a small plane with someone they didn't know very well was a shock for my parents. I barely remember it but am sure I felt it was an adventure.

My mother never went out to work — it was completely different during the 40s from today where it is normal for women to work. During my parent's time women who worked were considered low class, while higher class women were more elegant and enjoyed going out shopping or to coffee shops. My mother made a lot of friends, mainly through a Jewish organization, (Offidas) that prepared clothes and other items to send to soldiers who were fighting in the war.

At the beginning of the war, Brazil was under German influence and even considered entering the conflict. In an effort to influence both Brazil and Argentina to enter the war with the Allied Forces, Roosevelt promised to bring "Stahl," a company in the iron and steel industry into the country. Roosevelt

kept his promise and introduced the company in a place called Volta Redonda and Brazil entered the war on the side of the Allied Forces in 1942. In 1944 troops were sent to Italy, to fight against the Germans. Argentina didn't agree to enter the war and remained neutral. In fact, they continued to keep good relations with Germany receiving several German Nazis who went there to hide after the war.

My father hired a teacher to help him learn the language, as he needed to have good enough Portuguese to work. He was a cultivated man, an experienced engineer, spoke English, German, Polish and French and knowing the other languages provided him with a good base. He learned to speak Portuguese very proficiently and correctly.

My mother didn't have a teacher but learned through living there and dealing with locals. As was normal in Brazil at the time, we had a servant at home — it was a standard joke that the servant came with the furniture. I lived in Brazil from 1940 till 1955 and always had a maid at home. We had one called Rosalia — a very agreeable woman, energetic and strong minded. She decided to take my mother under her wing and help her learn about life. I mentioned previously that in Poland we had seven servants in the house and my mother never went into the kitchen to cook or into the grocers to shop. Her life was different now and she had to learn how to carry out all these tasks. Brazil was very well organized at that time, as there was an open weekly market with young men standing around with big empty baskets waiting to help customers load the shopping. Rosalia went along to show my mother what to buy.

The national meal in Brazil is rice, meat, and black beans, called *feijoada*. Throughout history it was served at weekends to the slaves by the owner of the house. During the week, the family ate very well but the slaves weren't given meat, just beans and rice, putting any leftovers into a big pot. At weekends meat was added to what was left, re-cooked and served to the slaves. The dish is basically the same one as Jews call *cholent*. Today, even in the best restaurant in São Paulo, every Wednesday and Saturday *feijoada* is served. It's prepared differently now with the best cuts of meat, mainly pork, and the rice and black beans served separately together with salad and oranges. It's delicious.

We didn't have too many newspapers at home, but we did listen to the radio and there was also a gramophone on which my parents enjoyed playing classical

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music, such as Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, and Chopin. My parents later bought a house to let out in São Paulo but continued to rent the same house for the rest of their lives. They were very lucky, as the owner, (Maneco Klabin, who was Jewish) was very nice and honest, who told them: “I don’t need the rent to live. So, what the law says, I take. If the law says you can take 2 percent more, I’ll take 2 percent more. If the law says keep the same price, then it’s the same price.” Other landlords weren’t so ethical and often found excuses to put up the rent or ask tenants to leave.

My parents rarely spoke about their experience of leaving Poland, and how they had arrived in Brazil. It took a long time for people to understand after the war finished about the Holocaust. I’m sure my parents suffered once they understood that so many of our family members were dead – but it was not spoken about. They were Polish, who became Brazilians and continued to speak German at home, only speaking Polish if they didn’t want my sister and me to understand.

I lived in Brazil for 15 years from 1940 till 1955, and although it took me some time to learn to speak Portuguese, eventually it became my first and most proficient language. My time there also provided me with many friends, adventures, and experiences – many of which stayed with me for the rest of my life.



Living is a constant process
of deciding what we are going to do.

Jose Ortega y Gasset

Brazil – Coming of Age

My mother continued to encourage me to do well in school and concentrate on my studies. I heard what she said, but when I went outside to play, that seemed to be the last thing on my mind. In those days, the streets were quiet and safe with very little traffic, so we had a lot of space to play and run around. Although I probably played ball games, I was never very good at sport. It never really interested me, and I didn't become involved. Later on, my family joined a sports club, as it was important to have a place with good air and somewhere to play at the weekends.

Despite my mother's input, I wasn't a good pupil, mostly because I didn't like to sit at home and do my homework. There were some classes, where I was particularly bad, for instance Portuguese. It wasn't because I couldn't speak the language, but the grammar, sentence construction, and learning about different parts of speech were complicated, and I didn't do well in the exams. To help me with this, my parents hired Regina Solani as a private tutor for me. She came to the house twice or three times a week sat with me and helped me a lot with my lessons.

While my parents were fair in their discipline, they were also quite strict, although I was never bitter about anything that happened. My mother occasionally threw out a clip behind the ear although it was not very strong. Marietta and I received the same treatment although I was worse behaved. My father very seldom gave out physical punishment but when he did it was with a small stick.

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Only I received such a punishment — it was never given to my sister. It's a very different world now and I never did anything like that to my children.

There was one occasion when my father was so annoyed with me that I received a strong punishment. My sister, at one time, was in love with Humphrey Bogart. She saw all his movies and had a big poster of him hanging on the cupboard. One day, at about the age of 12 or 13, I was practicing throwing a knife to see if I could hit a target. I opened the cupboard, saw Humphrey Bogart looking at me, took the knife and threw it at him. I probably 'killed' him about ten times, but I made one huge mistake. I forgot that behind the poster was a wooden cupboard, belonging to my father and I was not only killing Humphrey Bogart, but I was also damaging my father's property. I made about 20 holes in the cupboard and when my father came home and saw what I had done he was furious. Obviously, the poster could have been replaced, but the cupboard, wasn't so easy to repair — it would have needed a new door.

Then I got it with a stick — probably about 5-8 times, and it didn't hurt so much but I was very offended. He might have hit me some other time, lightly, but the incident with the poster and the cupboard is the only time that I remember. I carried on playing with the knife, but I didn't make any more holes in the cupboard, just throwing it on the floor or other places that were suitable.

I loved going to the movies. There was a cinema near our house, which showed children's films at the weekends, and I particularly enjoyed adventure movies. Superman and Batman already existed, although when we went with my mother it was often to watch a Charlie Chaplin movie.

When I was older, my parents would give me money so that I could go with friends, although I did have a problem once because of my refusal to get a haircut.

I always have, and still do, hate having my haircut. I refused to go to the barber shop for a long time at one point, and after some weeks, I looked awful, and my father told me, "You have to cut your hair, and if you don't go this week, there will be no movie." I said that I would go, but I didn't — and at the end of the week there was no money for the movie. I was very unhappy and went to the barber the following week, got my money, and enjoyed a movie night. I understood that I had to be educated and learned my lesson.

I had a couple of Jewish friends who lived quite far away but would come to our house to play when their mothers were having coffee with mine. I also had a couple of non-Jewish friends in our street, one of whom, (Luis Antonio de Castro Lima) I kept in touch with for a very long time and in fact I still have the wedding invitation he sent me in 1961, when I was already in Israel. I also spoke to him occasionally when I visited there.

When I was 10, I had a very difficult year in school. My sister was in the same school as me at that time and she had a bad experience with a very stern and disagreeable teacher. He was also responsible for discipline and Marietta had an incident with him, and he behaved very badly. Another pupil asked him, “Why are you being so rude to this girl, who just came from Europe and doesn’t even know good Portuguese?” That seemed to affect him and as a result he treated Marietta excellently.

My sister was an outstanding student, and then two years later João, her younger brother came along, wasn’t a good student and undisciplined on top of it. I had a horrible year with him, because he reminded me three times a week “How are you related to that wonderful girl Marietta?” I was very unhappy about this situation! It wasn’t like in France, where I succeeded to get a medal from school two weeks after Marietta won hers — but that whole year I didn’t manage to succeed. I don’t believe it had a long-lasting effect on me though — it was just a difficult year, but I survived.

Our classes lasted for two hours and then we had a 45-minute break when we could go out to play. Two minutes before the break this teacher would write a mathematical problem on the blackboard. It was usually a difficult calculation, which today any child could quickly solve on their iPhone but of course there was no such thing then and so we learned to do it the hard way. I was very good at mathematics, and in fact, I still am to this day. I was bad in Latin, Portuguese, discipline, sport, and physical education, but I was extremely proficient in mathematics, physics, chemistry, and English.

After he wrote a problem on the board, he told us: “Whoever brings me the result, can go out. So, if you do well, you can go out, even before the break begins. But if you are slow, and it takes a long time, you can’t go out even if you have to use the bathroom.”

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I always solved the problem within one or two minutes and was always one of the first in my class to go out to recess. He never commented on it, although I think it annoyed him, just reminded me that my sister was fantastic. (Of course, she is!)

When I was about 11 or 12, my parents enrolled me in a Jewish Scouts movement, known as Avanhandava. I don't know exactly what that word means — it's not Portuguese — but has a historical meaning, probably dating back to the Brazilian Indians.

We met at the weekends, and I was very proud to be a member of the Scouts. We learned to make knots, heard stories about Baden-Powell, and were taught never to lie, to be good to our parents and family. There was also some Jewish content, probably around the festivals, such as stories about Pesach, Chanukah etc. I knew some of this from home but some of the information was new to me. I was there until I was 16 and mostly enjoyed it — it was certainly very educational.

They also took us on camping trips which I particularly enjoyed as I loved being outside. I remember one occasion though that was awkward. My mother liked to spoil me and when we went on a two-day excursion outside of the city, she prepared me the most fantastic food. Obviously, we put all our food on the table, and everybody took what they wanted. Since my food was excellent, all the other boys loved it. Unfortunately, I had an unusual problem for a young boy, in that I was a very slow eater, (an issue that still exists today), and sadly, on those occasions caused me to miss out on my mother's wonderful food.

1944 was my Bar Mitzvah year but I don't think my parents were very concerned about it. They weren't particularly observant although we always went to synagogue on Rosh Hashana to hear the Shofar, and it was important for my parents to keep Yom Kippur, not so much because they were religious, but because they were traditional and enjoyed keeping the basic customs. They always fasted on Yom Kippur, and I too have fasted all my life on that day.

Willy Borger (we called him uncle) who was a great friend to my parents, offered to pay for me to have a Bar Mitzvah teacher, saying he wanted to give Hansi João a present. He was a conservative Jew — very Masorti, (traditional) and attended synagogue every Friday night as well as all the High Holidays. The teacher, Birnbaum (I don't remember his first name) came to the house once a week to prepare me for my Bar Mitzvah.

BRAZIL - COMING OF AGE



My friend Luiz Antonio de Castro, Lima



*Marietta and Uncle Willy Borger on the terrace
of our house in São Paulo*



My mother and me in Campos do Jordão February 1945

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My parasha (Ve Yelech) included Bileam and Balak: “He has to curse the Hebrew people, and instead of cursing he blessed them.” Birnbaum also taught me Jewish stories about Avraham Avinu, and when we were slaves in Egypt, etc. About a month before the bar mitzvah, I also had to have special religious lessons with the community rabbi. Rabbi Pinkus, Chief Rabbi of the Reform Community, gave me lessons and he was also present much later on, when my mother passed away in 1976, saying how much she loved life and beauty.

The time came and I did my piece in the synagogue, but I felt embarrassed singing in front of all those people. Today I can get up in front of a 100 people and speak freely, without any problem. Anyway, afterwards I had a lovely party at home although I remember it being a terrible balagan, (mess) with kids running up and down the stairs. There were a lot of people there and I received many nice presents, mainly books and games. I think I might have got my first watch then bought for me by Uncle Willy. He loved us all, particularly my sister, and pampered her at every opportunity. We were both always very fond of him.

Around this time, I had two very good school friends, Oswaldo Wolff, and Vittorio Corinaldi. Later on, both became my colleagues in the youth movement, Dror. Oswaldo, stayed in Brazil for family reasons, but Vittorio, an architect, came to Israel, and we spent time together on kibbutz Bror Chail. I was there for 10 years — he stayed for about 40. Today he lives in South Tel Aviv and is my best friend to this day.

These two friends knowing that I was completely green regarding all kinds of Jewish things asked me one day: “João, did you hear about the “White Paper?” I told them I had never heard of it, asking if it was white in color. They began to laugh, which I found quite offensive, but they then asked me “Did you never hear about Balfour and the Balfour Declaration?” At that time, I didn’t know anything about it or about Weizmann’s success, although of course it was a very important milestone in Jewish history. Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister had said: “Jews have a right to have a homeland,” but at the time I wasn’t interested. After these two lads started talking about it, they began to work on me, encouraging me to be more involved in Judaism, not just the religious aspect, but also the worldwide problem facing Jews.

This did start me thinking about why we were in Brazil and about why Jews were scattered all over the world. There was a lot we didn’t know, and nobody

spoke about Jews being killed. I did start to question why Jews didn't have a place of their own to live and began to pay attention to what was going on in the world.

More or less at the same time, (aged 14 or 15) I began to find that Scouts was becoming a bit boring and that I needed something a bit different and more interesting. By this time, we had also become interested in girls and wanted activities that included them. There were some nice girls in the Jewish community that met up together, and Oswaldo took the initiative to contact one of the girls, Mira Weinfeld (later Perlov). Oswaldo and I went as a kind of delegation, to meet her and a friend to convince them that we should form a Jewish group together. The girls accepted our idea and so we formed a group, that my friend Vittorio named Achdut (togetherness) for boys and girls aged 15/16 to enjoy cultural and social activities together. As it happens Vittorio's parents were very strong Zionists and his mother who spoke 10 languages also knew Hebrew.

I was (the victim) chosen to be the first one to give a talk to the group on the subject of Theodor Herzl. I felt a bit of a target as I had never heard the name before and didn't have the slightest idea who this person was. Ironically, today I live in the city of Herzliya, named in his memory, — just shows you how life sometimes works in mysterious ways.

Anyway, I had to prepare my talk — I had been given a challenge and I was taking it seriously. I read 'The Jewish State' and Theodor Herzl's biography and a little about the Dreyfuss Affair, in preparation. I found it all very interesting and managed to give the talk, although no doubt today I would be able to do much better explaining the moment in history, and how anti-Semitism and the Dreyfuss Affair influenced this Jewish Austrian journalist.

This period, '46, '47 was a period of awakening for many people especially Jewish youth around the world. We had cultured and intelligent parents, who spoke about world events. My parents knew obviously who Herzl was, even if I did not. In our house we spoke more about Rembrandt, books, and films rather than about Zionism.

Our group Achdut carried on successfully and we enjoyed good times together. I didn't have a romance at that time, but some of my friends did. Our cultural activities carried on and we had talks about Weizmann, Balfour, as well as

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international culture. We were not a Zionist group, and also arranged visits to museums and some very enjoyable excursions.

It was a nice group, and all went quite normally until a young man, Bernardo Cymeryng (Dov Tsamir in Israel) who was three or four years older than us, arrived causing a small revolution in our world. He was very charismatic, a real leader and in time we became friends. He had a big influence over me and eventually came to convince several of us to join the Youth movement Dror – today it is Dror Habonim.

He was born in Chelm, Poland and also arrived in Brazil before the war broke out. He was an assimilated Jew, with socialist/communist ideas. Somehow it happened that he came to know exactly what had taken place during the war. This changed him completely. He knew how to speak and how to convince others. He understood that we needed to have our own country and explained what was involved in the kibbutz movement. I remember him telling us how “we are going to create a new country with the socialist movement through the kibbutz movement.”

I know that if on the day that I boarded the boat to come to Israel, somebody had told me that all the kibbutzim are closed, I would say “Thank you. I will stay in Brazil.” I came to Israel more to be in the kibbutz movement and make a socialist revolution than for the idea of Zionism.



It's easier to smash an atom
than a prejudice.

Albert Einstein

To be a Jew

Brazil 1946: I was 16 years old and attended the Liceu Franco Brasileiro (the future Liceu Pasteur) and received my first lesson that being a Jew is not always easy. It's worth remembering that Brazil wanted to enter the war on the side of the Nazis and only strong opposition from the United States (Franklyn D. Roosevelt) avoided this. Still, in various circles, anti-Semitism was alive and well.

That was in 1946. Today Brazilian Jews play an active role in politics, sports, academia, trade, and industry, and are overall well integrated into all spheres of Brazilian life. There are rarely any reported cases of anti-Semitism in the country. However, this wasn't always the situation, and in my early teens, we encountered some unpleasant experiences as Jews.

My friends Oswaldo, Vittorio, and I were the only three Jewish boys in the class. At school we had a charismatic history teacher, Antonio Queiroz Telles, who taught us many interesting historical facts. However, he had two major problems. He liked to invent stories – some of which were unbelievable, and the second issue came to light when he showed himself to be antisemitic. One morning, he entered the classroom and said: “Attention, I am recommending an important book for you to read, to understand history: The Protocols of the (Learned) Elders of Zion.” At this moment, Oswaldo, Vittorio, and me, the only Jews in the class, got up and said: “Please, Professor, this book is a total fabrication and lie. None of it is true.” This book was well known, especially among anti-Jewish groups, and apparently was written sometime before the

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Russian Revolution, arguing that Jews all around the world are linked to dominate it financially and politically.

The three of us had the feeling that we had just been bitten on the leg by a scorpion. He looked at us and said, "You dare to contradict me? Get out! Immediately — out of my class!" When a teacher said that you had to leave, we did and went to speak to the school's Director, who was called Mr. Pontes. When we were in his room, we told him that we had a huge problem with our history teacher, who had recommended a book to our class that was full of lies. We told Mr. Pones that when we said something to him, he was angry we had contradicted him and threw us out of the classroom. We were all very naïve, as we believed that Pontes would call Telles to attention and forbid him to recommend this book. We received a huge shock, however, when Mr. Pontes looked at us and said, "You dared to contradict a teacher in class?!" Once again, we pointed out that he was recommending a book full of lies against Jews. His reply was, "Shame on you. You are suspended for three days. If this happens again, you will be expelled." We didn't tell our parents about this incident, because at that time it would not have helped, and we didn't want our parents to have to deal with a problem like this. It was very different from today, as parents had huge respect for the teachers, and also as new immigrants, we did not believe they had the power to change the school atmosphere. We came back to school after our three-day punishment and carried on as usual. There was nothing we could do. We understood that this teacher was an anti-Semite, and the Director didn't grasp the seriousness of his behavior or possibly had similar feelings. Today no teacher would dare to recommend that book.

We had another problem in our class with a boy called Esper Neto, who was of Syrian origin. He was born in Brazil, but his family originated from Syria. He always tried to offend us, especially our friend Vittorio who sat near to him in the classroom. He called him rude and unpleasant names. Vittorio was very white, and Esper said things like, "You are a white rat. You are a dirty element." Unfortunately, Esper Neto was a big boy and quite strong, so we knew that starting a fight with him wasn't an option. However, something happened one day, when another student, Guy Ribeiro de Andrada, got up, went over to Esper Neto, shook him, and said, "If you go on offending my Jewish friends, I will break you in pieces." From that day on, Esper Neto was as quiet as a mouse.



My high school class

A: Oswaldo

B: Vittorio

C: João



*My special good friends,
Oswaldo Wolff and
Vittorio Corinaldi,
Israel 2015*



*On our terrace,
São Paulo*

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He respected Guy and was afraid of him, so he never tried anything again. Guy belonged to one of the old Brazilian families with a great deal of influence, and he was very friendly, especially with Oswaldo. It showed us that when somebody reacts in defense of the Jewish people, it can work. Unfortunately, this doesn't always happen.

A year earlier, in April 1945, my father turned 50, and "Uncle" Willy Borger, my father's close friend, organized a small but fantastic birthday party for him. It was 75 years ago, but I still remember it clearly. Willy built a kind of theater and prepared excellent designs, accompanied by music my father knew from his childhood, mainly from Austrian Lieders, and taught us the words. By us, I mean my mother, sister, me, Willy, and his wife. The five of us were the choir, singing for my father. It was very impressive, and I can still remember the first line. It's in German: "In Jegendorf in Schlesiën, genau for fünfzig Yahr, war Rudi eins Geboren, sons weren wir heute nicht da. Er war schon damals ein besonderes Kind, wie Kinder Heute nicht meer sind. Schon in der Wiege war sein Schrei eins gehe ich zum Senai." The performance was all about my father's life, and of course, my mother, Marietta, and me. It lasted for more than an hour and was outstanding.

Translation of the song: "In Jegendorf in Schlesien, exactly fifty years ago, Rudi was born, or we would not be here. He was already then, a special child, and children today are not like this. Even in the cradle he had a cry — one day I will go to the Senai."

However, it wasn't an easy period for my father, and he also met with some very disagreeable anti-Semitic experiences. From being the owner of a large business to becoming employed on a monthly salary in an entirely new world was a significant change. He was working in a high position in the organization, Senai, a professional school for Brazilian children. There was no textile university in Brazil at the time, and my father's job was to organize the first one. My father was in the habit of resting for half an hour every day after lunch. At home, we knew this and respected total silence during that time. He had a reclining chair in the office that he used when he stayed there for lunch and then worked until the evening. One day the president of the national textile organization came to visit and asked Dr. Mange (The Director of Senai) why "this" Professor Drucker (my father) is asleep during working time? Dr. Mange

explained that the work that Prof. Drucker does after resting has a value worth 20 times more than the half-hour he rests. Director Mange liked my father very much and told him one day, “You know, Professor Drucker, I would very much like you to be my Vice-Director. Unfortunately, there is no chance, my friend, to do this while Mr. Abdallah is President of the Textile Industry. He will never allow a Jew to have that position. I’m very sorry.” We all encountered many difficulties during those years.

My father was very successful at Senai and after some time he founded the Textile University. We did enjoy some good times too, thanks mainly to my mother’s fantastic originality. She was the main element that held our family together. She helped my father overcome the shock and tragedy of the war, the fact that he was thrown out of Poland, and that he had lost his company and wealth in addition to the tragic murder of his family. Once he arrived in Brazil, he couldn’t afford a private car, and he had to work for a salary. One day my mother came home and announced, “At the end of the year, when we have time, we are going to Campos do Jordão for a holiday.” Unfortunately, my father wasn’t able to be with us because he was working, but my mother, sister, and I went in January during the school vacation. (My parents went there by themselves in May).

My mother chose to take us there because she knew it was a beautiful place about 1000 meters up a mountain, with a wonderful climate and clean air. Many people who suffered from tuberculosis went there to recuperate. My mother was a pioneer in taking us there for a vacation, but it was also the way a European from a well-off family would think — she needed to go somewhere nice once a year. Friends asked us quietly, “Is somebody sick? Who has tuberculosis?” Luckily, we were all perfectly healthy and just went to Campos do Jordão to enjoy a vacation. At that time, visitors needed an X-ray and a document to prove that they weren’t sick before being accepted into a hotel. Today Campos do Jordão is one of the luxurious places where rich Brazilians own lovely holiday homes. As tuberculosis is almost nonexistent now, nobody needs an X-ray or a document to go there.

I have a couple of stories about some mischief I caused during my early teens. We used to go to a lovely hotel called Umuarama, which was out of town, near a small lake surrounded by forests and nice places to walk. During holiday times

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it was full of youngsters, so my parents went to Campos during May for two weeks by themselves to stay in another more elegant hotel, 'Hotel Toriba'.

When I was about 14, together with two friends the same age, we created some serious problems during our stay in Umarama. One night we went to the lake and took all the boats to the middle of the lake and submerged them with stones.

In 1944 or 1945, hotel rooms did not have private bathrooms and toilets — guests used communal ones in the corridors. One afternoon we entered all the toilets, locked the doors, and went out through the windows. Then we sat by the stairs and waited. Guests came out of their rooms, tried the locked door, and returned to their room. After some minutes, they tried again, and then again. It wasn't just one guest but several, as people needed the toilet. And we, the small devils, were sitting by the stairs laughing at their troubles. After some time, they complained to the management, and a technician was called to open the doors. It was clear what had happened, and we were advised that probably we would not be able to visit the following year. However, my mother had become very friendly with the managers, and we were allowed to revisit the following year. One of my friend's fathers began to call me "The Terror of Umarama" to hide his son's participation. Once again, my mother showed her character and approached him during dinner, and in front of others, asked him to stop saying these things as I was not alone, telling him he should be ashamed of himself.

Marietta and I continued to go to Campos every year with my mother, although later on, it was just my mother and me as Marietta had other plans. I loved to go walking with my mother and was extremely jealous when somebody, especially a man, joined us. My mother was a lovely lady and had many admirers, who she always kept at a safe distance. I had some very modest romances — never anything serious. Marietta and I were in Brazil together in 2012 to celebrate her 85th birthday and spent two nights at the Toriba Hotel in Campos. It was a wonderful way for us to remember our parents, reminisce on the past, and enjoy the fantastic fondue they served there.

My mother often had wonderful initiatives. Years later, my father came back from a trip with my mother and told us, "I don't understand. I live a modest life. But Lisa (my mother) took me on a trip and suddenly, where am I? I am in Porto Fino!" Porto Fino, a lovely location, is one of the places where multi-millionaires



Hotel Umuarama – Compos

go for a vacation. “I don’t understand what Lisa wants from me. I don’t belong in Porto Fino.” But they both enjoyed a lovely week there. My mother was ahead of her times in many ways — not just in talking but also in her actions. She was also very good at organizing other activities. She was a member of an organization called “Ofidas” that collected clothes to send to soldiers abroad who couldn’t come home. We had meetings in our house for 10 or 15 women every few weeks (mainly Jews), who worked voluntarily for Ofidas.

With a population of 230 million, Brazil is not the same country it was in 1940 when we arrived. Then São Paulo had two million inhabitants and today there are approximately 12.5 million.

There were always differences between the rich and the poor, but the number of poor people was much smaller. Brazilians were fantastic people: friendly, helpful, kind, and almost always in excellent humor. Never sad. Due to social and financial inequality, there is a much higher crime rate today, and people have become much more impatient. Unfortunately, the country has suffered from an inefficient and corrupt government for many years, but basically, the people remain kind and friendly. Today when I compare with other countries that I lived in or visited I can say that in my mind Brazilians are still the best.



I don't want to get to the end of my life
and find that I lived just the length of it.
I want to have lived the width of it as well.

Diane Ackerman

The Beginning of my Aliya Journey

I was now entering into the most important journey of my life. The change from belonging to a social cultural group (Achdut) to a very strongminded political movement (Dror) was gradual and not something that my parents noticed. Slowly most of us became members of Dror, a pioneer movement intent on creating a different society, and at the age of 17, after having lived in four different countries, suddenly I learned about this place called Israel. I was excited about the idea of a Jewish country — a place where I could live normally as a Jew and a socialist and was especially intrigued with the exciting prospect of kibbutzim.

The Dror movement became extremely active in São Paulo as well as in many other cities across Brazil, with a membership of approximately 2,000. We met at the weekends and began to be organized as a youth movement, with the older members educating the younger ones. I was 17 at the time and was put in charge of a group of about ten 13 to 14-year-olds. We met every Saturday or Sunday afternoon, and I gave them some kind of talk on a subject of interest, but we had fun too.

We didn't know Hebrew at the time, so everything was in Portuguese, but we referred to the kvutsot (groups) in Hebrew, the instructors were madrichim, and our leadership meetings were known as chug madrichim. Behind it was a very strong intellectual ideological activity, which changed our lives

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dramatically. From that age until I was 24 and left for Israel, I had a very active intellectual and ideological life. I read more books during that period than at any other time. We read literature written by leftist writers, and obviously works by Marx, Freud, Borochoy, Rosa de Luxembourg, Gordon, and others. We knew who Ahad Ha'am was, and we read about Nachman Syrkin, and Ben Gurion, familiarizing ourselves with the Zionist ideology. Other authors we read and loved included: Romain Rolland, John dos Passos, Sinclair Lewis, John Steinbeck, Jorge Amado, Upton Sinclair, José Lins do Rego, and Érico Veríssimo.

We understood that Jews should have their own country and that we should live there. Everything we talked and dreamed about always connected to the kibbutz idea – everything. We studied Berl Katznelson's work, one of the intellectual founders of Labor Zionism, and admired him as our leader. Dov Tsamir was at that time very fundamental in almost every aspect of our life, and he succeeded in creating a cohesive group, with the understanding that one day we would go to Israel. After he left, we still had a strong group of youngsters, to carry on directing the movement. In time another young man joined us; an artist, by the name of David Perlov, who soon became our leader. David was born in Rio de Janeiro and later on became well-known in Israel for his work and achievements in making documentaries. In 1963, he made a 33-minute documentary, 'In Jerusalem' which came to be one of the most important films of Israeli documentary cinema. In May of 1973, Perlov began to film his everyday life alongside dramatic events that took place in Israel at the time. He continued this work for 10 years, sometimes with almost no economic resources, until the British television company, BBC Channel 4, expressed an interest in the project. Produced in association with Israel's largest television and film studio, Herzliya Studios, the result was Perlov's work *Diary* (יומן), which he also directed and narrated. In 1999, he was awarded the Israel Prize for his contribution to cinema.

There were others after him in our group, and then it was time for me and some of my friends to take over the role of leaders.

During this period, I was also preparing myself for university to study Electrical Engineering. The entrance exams were very difficult with less than 100 places available for over 800 applicants. I was lucky and succeeded

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in gaining a place in the highly sought after *Politécnica*, being ranked number 38 out of all the contenders. My parents were delighted, and my life took on the format of studying at University during the week and taking part in the youth movement at weekends.

Many of our group, including Dov Tsamir, had formed *garin Aliyah*, (*Aliyah* groups) and were leaving for their new lives in Israel. Each group consisted of 25-40 young people, meaning that approximately 100 young people were preparing to go to live on a *kibbutz*. Leaders of the movement began to see the reality of what was happening, in that the next generation (such as me and my friends) were going to study, causing concern as to who would be available to take on the work of developing the organization. I was in the first year of university, while others in our group were in their second or third years and there was nobody to take on the responsibility. It was also realized that the *kibbutzim* didn't have such a big need for university graduates. In 1950 we held a big meeting, "Seminar of Lapa", named after the place, where it was held. It was a three-day event that became well known in the Brazilian Jewish society, especially in São Paulo. At the end of the three days, during which we hardly slept, most of us decided to leave University. It wasn't everybody, but the majority of us reached this conclusion — including me. We decided to become full time activists in the Movement, with the aim of making it bigger and stronger. I started going to the homes of Jewish kids to try and persuade them to become members.

I was still living with my parents, but we needed to earn money to keep ourselves. Together with a friend, Ervin Semmel, I started doing something that I had learned in university that involved using an instrument, called a theodolite. This piece of apparatus is used to measure land after drawing a map of the area. It helps the city to plan and develop a certain area, as to how to divide the streets and infrastructure. Other friends found different work opportunities, but we pooled all our money into the commune.

Eventually we decided that three members of our group should continue to study — an architect, a doctor, and a physicist. They were very bright and capable, we called them the geniuses, and we felt it was wrong for them to interrupt their studies, although there was a medical student, in his fourth

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*Brazilian Madrichim group.
Jerusalem, December 1951.
Samaro Chaitchik, Jimico
Roizman, Joanna Sender
Nunho Falbel and me*

year, who also gave up studying. After we left University some of us went to study mechanics, or learn a new skill while others, such as me, began to dedicate themselves to the Movement.

Every family reacted differently to what was happening. Initially my parents tried everything to dissuade me from what I wanted to do, because they could not grasp the idea that their son was not going to be an engineer but was going to Palestine (as they still called it) to live in an agricultural society. They didn't think that I would be good for agriculture and my father claimed that I would end up being a shoemaker — a position he regarded as lowly. It was hard for both of them to accept my plans, especially my father, who felt that I wasn't doing anything other than educating other young people to go to Palestine. My mother was much less against it than my father who called me a *leidgeier* (A German word meaning doing nothing = useless).

Eventually my father told me that it wasn't logical for me to stay at home. He didn't consider what I was doing as being productive, and just saw that I wasn't studying or working. He told me to take a month or two, but after that he didn't want me at home anymore, saying; "We love you, but you need to go and find a place of your own." Vittorio's parents who were strong Zionists came to our house to try to convince my parents that this is a dream of a lifetime. It wasn't easy for my parents to accept that their son, instead of becoming a successful engineer, would become a pioneer, go to Israel and be a member of a kibbutz, but somehow Vittorio's parents managed to convince mine to postpone putting me out on the street, although my father still found it unacceptable. I had been brought up in an intelligent high-class bourgeois family and I had become a

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radical. Our group had gone from being University educated youngsters and decent members of society, to becoming a group of revolutionaries. It was a personal revolution for us all individually as well, and I am still very proud and happy about what we achieved.

We were a very loving family and always remained so, but I was not the first young person to hold different ideas from his parents. We had some very difficult arguments during that period, but there was never any animosity between us, and it certainly never changed the feelings that I had towards my father.

Luckily, they in turn were not the sort of parents to ban me from family life, and although my father was against me sitting at home doing nothing, he did tell me: "You are my son and if you come to us, we will always be here for you." Naturally, they were disappointed that I wasn't continuing with my studies, but again, understanding that it was my life.

Life was very different in those days and when my sister, Marietta, announced that she wanted to study medicine my parents told her: "We are in a very modest economic situation. We cannot have two children at university. We can have only one – and it should be the boy." It was regarded in those days that the boy would grow up to be responsible for keeping a family financially, therefore he should be more educated, assuming that the girls will have husbands to look after them. My mother never went out to work and I think my father would have been offended if she had. There was a kind of pride for the man to be able to sustain his wife and family, while the woman took care of the house. It was very different for me as my wife worked from the moment we were married, and I was always very proud of her. In later years I was very upset that my sister couldn't study because of me and then in the end I hadn't finished university.

In 1951 the movement recruited me and three others to go for a year to Israel, to take part in Machon L'madrichei Chutz La'Aretz, a special one year-seminar for youth leaders from abroad, organized by the Jewish Agency. They arranged for us to spend six months in Jerusalem and a further five months living on various kibbutzim.

My father was surprised and even impressed by the fact that this organization was going to pay for his son to go and study for a year, and it changed his

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position a little as he saw something bigger behind my wish to leave. I think my parents also believed that I would come back after a year in Israel to go back to my studies. After I completed my first year at university I deferred my registration for two years, which allowed me the right to come back to the university after a two-year break. I never took up my place again.

I was in Israel from October 1951 to August 1952 and had a fantastic experience, which included learning a lot as well as meeting some nice girls. We spent the first six months in Katamon, an area in Jerusalem, and studied Hebrew for three hours every day, with a fantastic teacher. We also started to learn about Zionist and Jewish history from the time of Avraham Avinu, our forefather Abraham. We received political instructions about the different parties and Israeli democracy. We also attended lectures about wars that had taken place and met important people on various occasions. After that we were sent to Kibbutz Geva, an older kibbutz for three months, and then spent a further month on Kibbutz Hatzerim which was younger, having been founded in 1946. We were in a group of approximately 70 young people from all over the world, but there were only five of us from Brazil.

One of the first boys to be born on Kibbutz Geva became very well-known. Didi Menusi studied literature and became a writer, journalist, poet, lyricist, dramatist, columnist and satirist. He decided to leave the kibbutz, which at that time, was considered to almost be treason. The kibbutz had to make a very difficult decision as to whether or not they were going to allow him to come and visit. Some members voiced the opinion that once he left, they didn't want to see him again in the dining room or roaming around the kibbutz. Later on, I had two special encounters with Didi.

We worked half-days and had lessons for the remainder of the day. Our teacher, Yehudit Simchoni, a very capable woman, was the mother of one of our generals, and provided us with some very interesting talks.

Unfortunately, I had a medical problem during my time on Kibbutz Geva. I worked in the grain storeroom but developed a terrible allergy. I have always suffered badly from hay fever, which I knew about, but this became a bigger issue. When I was a boy, in Brazil, and earlier in Poland, when children went to learn how to swim, I didn't go with because during the summer months I was

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always congested. It felt as if I had a constant cold, and nobody realized that the cause was due to allergies. When I was 13, I suffered a terrible reaction to something, and finally a doctor said: "It's just an allergy. It's not a problem at all." It was then that I learned to swim.

However, I didn't imagine that in the grain center it would become so bad but being proud and determined I carried on working there. By the time I did finally change my job, I had lost approximately eight kilos. One of the doctors told me: "You have to live in the city. A kibbutz is not for you." Of course, I was deeply offended by this and went to the mazkirut, the Director of the kibbutz to ask that the doctor be struck off.

After Geva we went to Hatzerim where I had an adventure with my friend Samario Chaichik, who later on became a renowned professor of oncology in Israel. Without asking permission from anyone we decided to go to Beersheba, which wasn't very far away. We were standing by a bus stop deciding which way to go, when a big truck stopped right by us and told us he was going to Eilat. He agreed to take us with him, and we jumped up onto the truck. Nobody knew where we were, and we could easily have got lost without anyone paying any attention. It might have taken a week before anybody started to look for us. We had traveled a long way and the roads at that time were not great. We arrived at a place called Ein Hutzub in the evening, which today is known as Hatzeva. This area in the Arava was about 300 meters below sea level in a huge crater. There was a large parking lot, with some benches and simple tables set up. Our driver told us he would go to sleep in his truck and that he would also eat there but had nothing to offer us. There wasn't anything else for us to do, so we went to sleep on a bench. The next morning when we woke up, to our surprise, the truck had gone. Maybe he didn't want to be involved with two young lads, or maybe he just forgot about us. A jeep soon arrived, and we asked him to take us to Eilat. He was going there to work and agreed to give us a ride. Luckily for us, he entered the city (at that time, it was only an army base) from behind. The front entrance was under army control, and we would have been sent back.

Years later, after I got married, my dear wife Carmela told me that her father Gavriel worked as a cook in those days near Ein Hutzub. Israel was in a big recession (Tzena) at the time, and even though he was a competent electrician, he didn't have any work. In order to support his family, he had to accept

anything he was offered. Obviously, at the time, I had no idea of Carmela's or Gavriel's existence. Strange world...

We spent two days in Eilat, and by mistake I entered into an army camp and got caught. I hadn't shaved and was poorly dressed and looked like a dangerous Arab terrorist. They asked me: "Are you alone?" I said: "No I have a friend waiting outside." "So, bring him in." This was at the end of our second day, and we were near the city entrance trying to hitch a lift. I went to get him and realized how stupid these soldiers were behaving. If they suspected me, why were they letting me go? Luckily, I didn't run away, as at one point I looked behind me, and saw two soldiers with their guns completely ready. If I had run, they would definitely have shot me. They separated us, so that we could not speak to each other, and we were taken to an officer for interrogation. He spoke to us very harshly, telling us "You are so near the border. If you cross the border, you will disappear. Nobody knows you are here — you would never be found." He called the Director of the Machon, (seminar) and when we arrived back to the kibbutz, we got another dressing down. However, we survived and felt that we had a very nice and special adventure.

At the time, the Dror Youth Movement immigrants from Brazil went to Kibbutz Afikim for a while before arriving to Bror Chail and occasionally, we would go to join them for the weekend. On one of these visits an important political MAPAI meeting (Israel's Labor Party) was held together with the board of the Kibbutz Movement. It took place in private, with no members of the press attending. It was a serious meeting with a big discussion, about whether or not to accept possible reparations from Germany.

Begin had organized the Herut party (Israel's right-wing party) to walk to the Knesset in Jerusalem, which at that time was located in an old building in King George Street, where they demonstrated and threw stones at the building in protest.

Ben Gurion came to that meeting in Afikim which was attended by approximately 100 people. I was so happy to be a part of that special occasion, and to hear Ben Gurion speaking about the problem of the reparations. He said, "At the moment I am not in love with the Germans. If I had a button on my table that I could press and the German people would disappear, I could

argue with you if I should press the button or not. I am not saying that I think that we should press the button.” However, he did carry on saying; “My friends, such a button does not exist. The German people are there. We are here. We need these reparations. It is fundamental for the State of Israel to receive it. There is no button. We have to find a way, and we have to accept it.” I remember this very clearly and of course was delighted to have had the personal honor together with my group to meet David Ben Gurion, and shake his hand (I never washed mine again!)

We also attended conferences — one particularly good one was with Baruch Azania who spoke about politics and made a big impression on me. At that time there were 1.5 million inhabitants in Israel, and today we have a population of over 9 million — it’s a different country. In those days it was a new country with a lot of dedication, and belief in a big and positive future.

After 11 fantastic months in Israel, one of my Brazilian colleagues from Dror and myself had to return home by boat. We both had Polish documents with visas that were only valid for a year. Our trip back was quite awkward. By then, our relationship had deteriorated as at the beginning of our stay, this colleague tried to take leadership of the group. One evening he came to me for a private conversation and explained that he was superior in all senses over “poor” me in an unpleasant and arrogant way. He told me I should be quiet at our meetings and accept his leadership. He also spoke very unkindly about the other four members of our Brazilian group. It was a shock for me. Never before had anyone attacked my competence or my intelligence, directly to me in this or any other way. The next morning, I advised him to stay away and never dare to come near me again. My strong adverse reaction to his ridiculous demand avoided him taking leadership. Now, strange as it sounds, we shared one cabin on the long boat trip from Israel back to Brazil. We did not talk at all. It was a very difficult sixteen days. He became very ill with seasickness and obviously, I tried to help, bringing him tea and soup, but the exchange was minimal. Later, in the movement, we had to work together but never in a friendly way. It also happened that we disagreed on an important matter regarding the education of the younger generation. It came to a vote in the General Assembly, and he lost, which caused him to become even more bitter since education was his strong field.

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David Ben-Gurion with Latin American madrichim, 1951

Life is not a picnic. A good and important proverb and as you see quite true. Now let us come back to the period in the seminar and my intimate feelings in the movement.

For somebody who did not go through this period in Brazil and in Israel, it's difficult to understand the fascination, richness, and the personal involvement in what was happening. The personality of our group changed our beliefs and determination. We had a burning excitement of life. In normal life you are 50-60% excited. We were 110% excited. We believed in what we were doing and that we will be able to change our society. We felt we were creating something new and that we will slowly transform, first the kibbutz, then society, eventually making Israel one big kibbutz. We were absolutely sure of ourselves, and that this was a fantastic idea.

It was during this period that I made up my mind that I was not going back to university, but instead I was going to dedicate my time in Brazil to strengthening the youth movement, working towards creating a Zionist revolution, and then my plan was to emigrate to Israel and make a life for myself on a kibbutz.



To accomplish great things,
we must not only act, but also dream;
not only plan, but also believe.

Anatole France

Aliyah

When I returned to Brazil after one year in Israel I knew where my future lay and explained to my parents that I was totally dedicated to Israel, and that living on a kibbutz was my future. They did not agree with my plan, but they accepted what I told them.

It was another four years until I left, and that period changed us all. It changed me in a way that I still feel today as my life has been much richer and more interesting than it would have been otherwise. I think I gained more in that period than at any other time. I'm not just talking about when I met my wife and falling in love — that is something different — but how all the experiences during that time enhanced my life forever.

Those of us involved with the organization immersed ourselves completely in our cause. We were working 12 hours a day going out to find new youngsters to join the Dror Movement as well as meeting up to discuss if we were going about things in the right way. We would carefully analyze anyone who wanted to join us to check if he or she was suitable and took into account any personal problems we encountered, for instance if someone had a health issue or a family concern. I was sent twice on special long-term missions to other cities, once for four months to Rio de Janeiro, and then for six months to Porto Alegre. I had a big problem there as some of our most capable members, probably just a couple of years younger than me, were being influenced by another youth movement,

Hashomer Hatzair, politically placed more to the left, and they were trying to influence them to leave ours. I had an ideological challenge trying to convince them that our way was the right way, and not the other. They remained interested in Israel and the kibbutz way of life, but we were socialist, while they were leaning more towards the Communist side. We saw this as a problem for the future and it became our battle.

Apart from these activities we loved going to the theater, and concerts — mostly classical music but not exclusively. It was a fantastic time in Brazil for music and whilst we were intent on our mission, we were also enjoying our youth. I always had plenty of friends, boys, and girls, to socialize with, although I didn't have a steady girlfriend until I came to Israel a few years later.

The months I spent in Porto Alegre were also difficult as I was only working for the Movement and therefore had no income. I received money for my expenses, which were extremely modest, just to cover traveling and food. I was living with a nice family who were very friendly towards the Youth Movement. I was only sleeping there, eating breakfast, and then going out all day. Our plans were to build a socialist society and we didn't have very big demands or needs for ourselves.

During my time in Porto Alegre, my mother wrote to tell me Marietta had gone on an extended trip to America, then later to Europe, where she met and married an American officer. She came back to Brazil for a while, and then eventually went to live in the United States.

I had difficulties in Rio de Janeiro as well, but for different reasons. In the mornings I would have to take the bus or the tram from wherever I had slept the night before to the Jewish quarter. The difficulty for me was that the bus passed all the fantastic beaches of Rio de Janeiro. Beautiful beaches full of young people, including wonderful girls, and I was stuck on the bus going to meet some youngsters to talk about ideas and dreams for the future.

We were intent on living for the future and the socialist life and saw it as being a step up. Regular daily affairs were not relevant — the only subject that was relevant and important to us was the future we were building.

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I kept in touch with my parents as much as possible during the months I was away. The telephone at that time was still quite primitive so we mainly communicated by letter. My parents wrote much more than I did, especially my mother. I think that for every seven or eight letters I received from her, I just wrote one in reply. I regret to this day that I didn't reply to every single letter I received, but that's how it is with young people, and I was no different.

We were in contact all the time with the Movement in Israel. The leader of our group, Dov Tsamir, was already there and we exchanged letters regularly. I think the post office worked more efficiently in those days than it does today.

During those four years in Brazil something very special happened. One of our leaders, a unique member of our group, Paulo Singer, who was also a close friend of mine, decided that we should make the socialist revolution in our own country and that there was no reason to go to Israel, telling us: "we can do it in Brazil." By the way, he became famous in Brazil as a political leader — more an ideological leader than anything else. He had a fantastic mind and became a well-known professor in economics and politics at the University of São Paulo. He also served for some years as Secretary of Development for the city of São Paulo. His ideas were always to the left, but he was very well respected.

We arranged a meeting for our leaders to allow Paulo to present his arguments so that we could decide what to do. However just at that time, I underwent a hernia operation in São Paulo (a result of my work and allergy during my stay on Kibbutz Geva) and had to stay in bed for a couple of weeks at my parents' house. As I was one of the leaders, and close to Paulo, we decided to go ahead and hold the meeting in my bedroom. It was only a small room and suddenly there were about 18 or 20 people in there, sitting anywhere they could find; on chairs, the floor, on the bed. What was even worse, was that some of them were smoking. It was all a bit crazy. My mother, a civilized lady, and a generous host came to offer us coffee and cake. I think she almost fainted when she opened my bedroom door and saw 'all the barbarians' there, crowded around her precious son. She quickly closed the door and disappeared.

The discussion lasted for about two hours during which time, Paulo explained his proposal, that instead of going to Israel, we could carry out our revolution in Brazil. We were a very strong group with about 40 or 50 active and

ALIYAH



*Marietta and her husband – Rufus Francisco Ortega.
September 1955, Wiesbaden, Germany*



Dror Head Office – myself and friend

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committed youngsters, making us potentially very influential. He didn't propose that we create a kibbutz in Brazil, but that we join the Brazilian Socialist Party and with our initiative and energy, change the way the movement operated, making it much more effective. However, in the end only Paulo and two others from our group followed that path. We remained on good terms, although, due to our differing opinions our friendship was never quite the same. There were no hard feelings, we just went our different ways.

In 1955 our group decided that we had reached the point where younger leaders were now coming into the Movement and that it was time for us to follow up on our decision made some years ago — to go to Israel. Our Aliyah group consisted of about 60 or 70 people, including some Jewish families from the South of Brazil, made up of two or three generations. The group also included a special Youth Aliyah unit of about a dozen youngsters, aged 13 or 14, who were leaving without their parents.

It was time for the 'famous' triumvirate, Oswaldo, Vittorio and me to be dissolved. Vittorio, by then was an architect and married, and he was coming with us, but Oswaldo, due to family reasons was staying in Brazil.

To help with preparing our departure we were given a list of what we should take with us, suggesting that we keep things to a minimum, and not to bring certain items such as ties or elegant suits as we wouldn't be needing them, but also emphasizing the things that would be useful for us to have. Despite the fact that my mother wasn't happy about me leaving, she prepared a fantastic trunk for me with many items that proved to be very useful.

At the time, the usual way to make this journey was firstly to arrive in Santos, a large port, at approximately 10 a.m. and wait in a police-controlled line. First, they loaded the luggage before allowing the passengers on board and allocating the cabins. After that everyone could go back to their parents who then received permission to go aboard. This whole process took about seven or eight hours and was quite difficult for the traveler but torture for the family they were leaving, as that whole eight hours was spent saying goodbye.

When it came time for us to leave, my friend Ervin Semmel and I decided, not to put our parents through this ordeal. After Santos, the ship sailed to Rio and the

whole process would be repeated the next day with other Olim who lived there. We decided, that as I was in charge of all the logistics and Ervin was Director of the trip, we would accompany the whole group to Santos, put our luggage onboard, get our cabin but not sail with the ship. Instead, we would go back to the city, spend the last night with our family and go to the airport the next day, and at our own expense, fly to Rio. Farewells in an airport take much less time and so not only would we have another night at home, the actual parting the next day, would be far less emotional for us all. The plan was good, but things began to go wrong when Ervin didn't arrive at the airport on time. The plane was ready to leave, and desperate to delay it, I went to stand on the steps leading up to the plane and started pleading with the pilot, that "my friend is coming any minute. Please wait — my friend is coming!"

Today they would have called security and I would have been dealt with quite harshly. However, this was in 1955 and it was an internal flight — São Paulo to Rio. I managed to hold the plane up for almost 15 minutes and eventually Ervin arrived. (I muttered to him that he owed me!). We left and arrived in Rio and boarded the boat. The next stop was in the North of Brazil, and then on to Dakar in Senegal where once we were docked, we would have time to explore the city.

During the days at sea everybody had been busy writing letters, and as we were a group of over 60 people, and many had written two or three letters, there were about 200 envelopes waiting to be mailed. Ervin who was Director of the trip asked me, another boy and two girls to be responsible for posting the letters. I told him "Yes, we will send the letters in the afternoon, but in the morning, we are joining the excursion." Ervin didn't agree as he thought it would be better to deal with the post in the morning, but I was determined to go on the sightseeing tour — which we did.

About midday we left the group and made our way to the Post Office. However, when we got there, we found out that they wouldn't accept French money, so we had to rush to the bank to change our currency. There was a line there and it took some time but eventually we made it back to the Post Office and started buying stamps for our 200 letters. Some were going to Brazil, some to Israel, we had letters of all shapes and sizes, and all needed different denominations of stamps. They gave us everything we needed, and we started the long job of

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licking and sticking them all on correctly. Until today I can remember the taste of Dakar glue in my mouth!

As soon as we finished gluing on all the stamps and the letters had gone, we jumped in a taxi to take us to the ship. As we were approaching, we heard the ship's horn blaring, jumped out of the taxi, and ran as fast as we could, satisfied that we would arrive at the port in time. However, it was a large vessel, and we weren't near enough to see that there was already a gap of approximately five meters between the ship and the port. We had missed it! Ervin had tried to pay back his debt to me for the airplane that I had held up for him, but unfortunately, he wasn't successful. Apparently, they had waited for about 10 minutes, but it wasn't enough. We didn't understand why the ship left Dakar so punctually as there was often a delay of about two or three hours from other ports. We discovered later that there is a big fine in Dakar for late departures, so the Captain kept strictly to the time schedule.

Ervin was waiting for us and as always acted very seriously and efficiently and had our money and all our passports ready for any eventuality. He shouted out that there was a motorboat waiting for us and that we should run as fast as possible. If it reached the ship while still in the port area, we could get on. However, if the ship had already made it out to sea, it would have been much too dangerous. Luckily, the motorboat reached the ship in the port area but there was no ladder there anymore, so we were thrown ropes to climb up like monkeys. We needed to jump up to reach the ropes, but one of the girls was scared to do it. She was afraid and embarrassed (some problem with her underwear), so a sailor just picked her up and threw her up to the ropes. She grabbed hold of one and managed to get herself on deck. Eventually we were all back onboard. Most of the passengers, and certainly, all our own group, were watching, shouting encouragement and applauding. It was a real show.

There were other adventures in Dakar during our short time there, one of which was quite frightening. We were walking along and suddenly a large man who was just standing around took one of our girls who was five meters behind the rest of us. Nobody saw this happen, and he just picked her up, kissed her and put her down again. He disappeared after that, but naturally she was very shocked and scared by the experience.

We really enjoyed our next stop in Barcelona where we had a fantastic visit and sailed to Marseille the following day to change ship. We were now on board the *Negba*, an Israeli vessel, sailing from Marseille to Haifa. Vittorio and his wife Jaffa, (she had been my girlfriend for a short time), were going to Italy to visit his family, so they left the ship and took a train. I also boarded a train to Paris, on the way to Germany to visit my sister for a couple of days. She had recently married Rufus (Rufus Francisco Ortega). My brother-in-law was from Spanish aristocratic origin, a non-Jew, Bachelor of History and English, and a very nice and special person. They were living in Wiesbaden, near Frankfurt. Rufus had been an officer in the American Air Force, and had fought in the war, but he was also an actor. He had a contract to appear in a film and was waiting in Germany to begin working on it. I was looking forward to visiting Marietta and to meeting my new brother-in-law. It was 1955, and even though the war had been over for 10 years, there was still plenty of bad feeling towards the Germans, as it had been some years before we became aware of the devastation caused by the Holocaust. I tried not to speak one word of German while I was there. Despite our feelings we drove around Wiesbaden, which is a very nice city, and had a good time. Most importantly I could see that my sister was very happy.

When I left them, I went to Florence where I met my friends Vittorio and Jaffa, spent a day with them, and then went alone to Napoli. In Napoli I had adventures with three Italians who tried to cheat me in different ways. One offered to arrange a meeting with his sister, showing me a fantastic picture of a girl who surely could not have been his sister. I also didn't believe that she was interested in meeting me. Obviously, I didn't go ahead with that, but then a second Italian who spoke terrible English, tried to tell me that he is an American, and was attempting to sell some beautiful watches. The guy he was trying to persuade didn't have enough money, but said he was going to bring it later. He suggested that I give him the money, take the watches as a guarantee, and wait for the other Italian to come back with the cash in an hour — promising me that I would make a profit on the deal. If I had agreed I think I would probably still be sitting there today! The third one was a taxi driver. I was very keen to go to Pompeii and I asked him, "How long will it take?" His reply was "How long do you have?."

During the time I had been in Paris, Germany, and Italy, the *Negba* had already returned from Israel, and I knew it was leaving again to go back at 5.00 pm that

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day, but I told him that I have until midnight. “Oh, no problem. The journey to Pompeii is 2½ hours, then you can stay there for a few hours and another 2½ hours back.” It was 10 o’clock in the morning but I understood from the driver that it wasn’t for me, so I didn’t go. Instead, I had a nice day in Napoli and boarded the ship in the afternoon.

It took five days to reach Haifa and I finally arrived on 9th November 1955. This was the beginning of my new life in Israel – I was ready to enjoy new experiences and to begin fulfilling my dream.

I was issued with an immigration card and my new life started immediately, as at that momentous moment my name was changed from Hans Herman and, as if to help me start my new life, I had now become an Israeli named Jochanan Drucker. The fourth time in my life that I changed my name.



My parents, Marietta and her daughter Caren Diane

Preparing to live your dream is postponing it.
You are either living it, or not.

Alan Cohen

Kibbutz Life

I had arrived. I was in Israel — my dream was beginning to come true. I was by myself, but it didn't matter. I was young, fit, I could speak several languages, and I was more than capable of finding my way around. My large trunk had gone ahead with the group, so I just had a suitcase to deal with. In those days, the absorption practice was that we spent about half a year on an older kibbutz where the members had more experience dealing with newcomers before being sent to our assigned kibbutz.

The idea during those early months was to learn Hebrew as soon as possible, although I was an exception, as I already knew a lot from my previous visit to Israel. We spent the first few nights in Bror Chail before we moved to Kibbutz Ramat Jochanan, located just Northeast of Haifa. Only the younger members of our group went to Ramat Jochanan. The older couples who had come with small children stayed at Bror Chail. Few others had enjoyed the experience I had when I attended the Seminar for Youth Leaders, living for three months on Kibbutz Geva and then another month on Kibbutz Hatzerim. However, some of the group had been through hachsharah (preparation) on a farm in Brazil, which was similar to a small kibbutz. We were immersed in kibbutz life quickly, finding out first thing in the morning where we were working that day, eating all our meals in the communal dining room, and sharing social occasions. We learned how to live as a collective, receiving toiletries and other necessary items only on distribution day. Our clothes were all washed in the kibbutz

laundry and returned to us — not always ironed — but always clean. We were allowed, and in fact, encouraged, to attend the weekly General Assembly meetings to observe and learn what took place there. We soon understood that these were serious meetings, as the General Assembly was responsible for all the decisions regarding every aspect of kibbutz life. They also discussed and made decisions regarding members' private lives, for example, if somebody wanted to study, it was put before the GA to decide whether the request could be approved. It was important that we became proficient in Hebrew, and we were divided into groups for daily Hebrew lessons. We worked two hours less than the kibbutz members to allow us extra time for lessons in the afternoon.

During this time, we also began to think about future professions. I wanted to be an electrician, as I had begun to learn electrical engineering during my year at university. I was sent to help an excellent electrician, a man called Moshe Lekach, and worked with him for six months. The work was hard physically as at that time, it was often necessary to break through walls to create the connections. There were many occasions when I mistakenly banged my fingers when hammering a wall, which meant that the next four hours of work were not only tiring but also painful. I also received a few electric shocks, but I am happy to say that I lived to tell the tale. They weren't high voltage shocks, but even so, they weren't pleasant and could have been dangerous. Obviously, Moshe Lekach was angry with me every time something happened, as it was always my own fault.

My friend Ervin Semmel went to work in the fields and learned to drive a tractor, while one of our girls, Rachel, was put to work in the cowshed, milking them three times a day, even during the night. Another one of our group, André Fischer, was also sent to work with the cows, but we soon found out that he wasn't so particular about his personal hygiene. Looking after animals makes you dirty and smelly, so the cowsheds were fitted out with showers to allow the workers to wash and change into clean clothes at the end of their shift. We were housed three in a room, I shared with André and Ervin, and we discovered that when he had a late shift, often finishing in the middle of the night, André didn't bother to take a shower or change his clothes. Naturally enough, he was exhausted when he finished work, so he just came back to our room, threw himself on the bed, and fell fast asleep. We were already sleeping, but slowly

KIBBUTZ LIFE



Ramat Jochanan – Ervin, myself and friends.



The beginning of my Mother's "inspection trip" to Israel and America to check up on her children, 1956



Kibbutz members relaxing after work

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a terrible smell woke us up. It was absolutely horrible. The following morning, we said to him, “André, you can’t come back to the room smelling like that,” so for the next couple of times he took a shower before going to bed. However, he then stopped bothering again so, we locked our room one night, although we did have to let him in when he started banging on the door. Another night, we planned exactly what we would do. It was a rainy wintery night, and he came running back to our room, dirty and smelling disgusting, laid down on his bed, and fell into a deep sleep. We got up, opened the door, and slowly took the whole bed out, with him asleep in it, carried it down the corridor, and put him outside in the rain. We ran back to our room, locked the door, and slept till the morning. From that day on, he always came back clean — he had learned his lesson.

We worked hard, but we were happy and appreciated the social life, especially at Jewish festivals, when we enjoyed wonderful meals and entertainment. One of the kibbutz members was Matityahu Shalem, a composer and poet, known as the first musician in modern Hebrew times, to compose words and melodies together. Due to his input, at Shavuot, there was a beautiful show by a group of dancers from the kibbutz. It was well known all over the country, and many visitors came to watch. Also, at Pesach, the kibbutz prepared a unique Haggadah. It wasn’t religious in any way — more a book about life in the spirit of Pesach with some biblical texts and various songs. LOVELY.

Other activities included political lessons. At that time, Ramat Jochanan was part of MAPAI (Labor Party), and we were given explanations of the different movements. We were also given the opportunity to become involved in the political aspects of what was going on in the country. Visitors from the party came to talk to us, and we sometimes attended meetings. I found this all fascinating as politics had always been of great interest to me, and I became very involved.

In spite of the fact that we were having a wonderful experience, none of us planned to stay at Ramat Jochanan as we were more interested in being with our Brazilian group. Of course, there were exceptions, if a young boy or girl became romantically involved with a kibbutz member and chose to remain there.

We kept in touch with our members at Bror Chail all the time. There was a liaison person from the kibbutz working with our group continuously, and we went back to visit whenever we had a long weekend break. That was

where we were going to become members, and they were happy that we were learning everything we needed to know and would then be coming to join them. I started a romance in Ramat Jochanan with a young girl called Rachel Weiner, which became more serious in Bror Chail later.

In May 1956, we left Ramat Jochanan and went to live in Bror Chail. It had been created in 1947/48 by young Egyptian Jews who came to colonize Israel. They needed new people later on as there were so few of them, so the Brazilian group of our youth movement Dror came to this kibbutz. Eventually, there were many more Brazilians than Egyptians, and in fact, it became known as the Brazilian kibbutz. Even today it is still famous for football and the Samba.

We began living a normal kibbutz life, taking part in all the activities. I was an electrician and became responsible for the electricity supply for the whole kibbutz. Bror Chail was not connected to the national electric line, but we had our own generator, which I had to service and look after. It worked well most of the year-round, but during the winter months, it often liked to stop at two or three in the morning. This meant that not only was the kibbutz in complete darkness but also the refet, where the cows were kept, had no power, and the milking machines stopped, causing a problem as the cows had to be milked at regular hours.

Somebody would come running to the tzrif, (simple wooden house) where I lived and bang on the door shouting: "Jochanan, quick, come." I got up, pulled some long rubber boots over my pajama bottoms, and ran out. It was cold, muddy, and obviously dark, but I ran to where the generator was kept, fixed it, and on many occasions, I was back in bed 15 minutes later. Despite these episodes, I enjoyed being an electrician as I found it very interesting, although once I almost fell down from an electricity pole. It was a Friday — the weekend — and I just wanted to finish work so that I could go home and rest. A young woman from the kindergarten came to tell me that the lights on the lamp post in front of the kindergarten weren't working. I went to check it out, put up the ladder, and climbed up to change the bulb. In my hurry, (Friday), I hadn't put on my security belt, and just as I got up to the top, I touched the electric line with my left elbow and received a powerful current. Instinctively I pushed the ladder back. As it happened, my right hand was holding the line attached to

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the pole, which was not electric, so I did not fall. Apart from the shock and a small cut on my hand, nothing else happened to me. I was very lucky as I could have broken my back. I learned my lesson.

I also had an incident later on involving the generator, when again, I wasn't as careful as I should have been. It worked on kerosene, which came in barrels of 300 or 400 liters, I don't remember exactly how much they weighed, but they were very heavy. There was a small slope leading down to the generator, and I usually moved them with someone's help. That day there was nobody around, so I did it on my own. As I positioned the barrel to go down, I realized it was too heavy for me to control, and suddenly it rolled back onto my leg. Again, I was fortunate to escape without any broken bones, and the only damage I received was a pressure mark on my leg from the barrel. Once more — a case of more luck than wisdom.

The Sinai war broke out on October 29th, 1956, just a few months after we arrived. We had received some basic training on the kibbutz, showing us how to use the standard Czech rifles and Uzi, Israel's special machine gun, and had gained some elementary knowledge of self-defense. When I arrived in Israel, the law was that youngsters going to kibbutzim or moshavim near the border were exempt from full military service, as it was considered that they were in the first line of defense, known as *sfar alef*. Military service at that time was two years for men, but if you were living in a *sfar alef* settlement for a period of four years, it was considered as full army service. Bror Chail is located near Sderot and the Gaza border, so although I was in the reserves later on, as I spent ten years on the kibbutz, it was considered that I had served my full army service.

Before the war, the kibbutz had experienced quite frequent infiltrators, called *fedayeen*. They weren't terrorists but were still considered dangerous and came specially to steal agricultural material from us: chickens, sheep and even tractors. Although these were their targets, it still would have been dangerous to meet one of them in the dark. The kibbutz was well guarded every night. All members took their turn at guard duty, (we did shifts of two or three hours each), even after a full day's work, including the girls of course, although they often did less.

We also prepared trenches around the kibbutz, and we were told to be prepared at all times. A few days before the Sinai War, and during the whole conflict, the

kibbutz had to be in complete darkness — BLACKOUT — and we had to be in the trenches. On a moshav nearby, Heletz, somebody fell in the dark, and by mistake, or possibly negligence, someone put the light on at the first aid station. One of the fedayeen threw a rimon (grenade) through the window and sadly, somebody was killed. It was a very serious and dangerous period.

When the war finished, we received orders to help the army occupying Gaza. I remember going with a group two or three times to Khan Yunis, to help keep order, but we didn't witness any incidents. It was the only occasion I was in the Gaza Strip.

Before the war broke out there was a big discussion on the kibbutz, about what would happen if Israel were to be attacked from the Gaza Strip and women and children were sent out in front of the soldiers. Obviously, the majority of the members agreed that we could not shoot women and children, but it was never clear what we would have done. Luckily for us, it never happened.

Anyhow, Ben Gurion decided, after strong pressure from America and Russia, to give the whole area back — not just Gaza, but also the whole Sinai Peninsula that we had taken from Egypt. The chapter ended and we went back to our everyday lives. Gaza remained Egyptian until the Six Day War in 1967 when we occupied it again but did not return it to Egypt. This was a bad decision as it is a huge problem now.

As I mentioned I enjoyed working as an electrician and was grateful I was also able to have the opportunity to use my initiative. I began to negotiate with Israel's Electric Company for us to receive our energy supply from the national grid and eventually succeeded in reaching an agreement. The work involved putting up approximately 50 electrical poles around the kibbutz and I was practically in charge of the whole installation which took some months to complete. Twenty men were working on it, and I was in charge. Sderot, which was a very small city at the time, already had electricity but other kibbutzim and moshavim in the area had no connection.

I found kibbutz life interesting and active. There were various committees covering all aspects of life, such as social, cultural, political, and of course, the kibbutz's economics. I was particularly connected to the political committee



The cover photograph shows Yochanan Dar of Bror Chayil, Assistant Secretary of Ichud Habonim, speaking at the Founding Conference. With him appear Moggy Margalit (Kfar Blum), joint secretary of the new movement; and Meir Zarmi (Ma'ayan Zvi), Secretary elect of Hanoar Haoved Velomed.

Founding conference for new Youth Movement, 1961



My mother and I on Kibbutz Bror Chail



My mother's visit to the Kibbutz in 1956, standing by my Tzrif where I lived.

and became very active. This was obviously noted as sometime later I was called upon to participate on the Youth Movement's political committee.

I shared my room with two contemporaries, and we became very good friends. One was Ervin Semmel, my friend who waited for me in Dakar, and the other was Markin Tudor, who was also from Dror. He was very bright and prepared most of the education plans for the movement. Markin was in charge of the *pardes* (citrus orchard). Years later, after he left the kibbutz, he worked as a caterer and sometimes came to our house to prepare fantastic *churrascos* (barbeques) for us. We continued to speak Portuguese when we were together, as they were still learning Hebrew and didn't know as much as I did. This was 60 years ago, and unfortunately, today, neither of them is still alive.

There were two very nice young girls in the room next to us, and a couple lived in the third room in our block. The two girls became good friends of ours, and our routine was to finish work at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, come home, and then the five of us would sit together, drink coffee, and spend hours talking about many things. At about 7.00 o'clock we went to eat in the dining room. After dinner, it was time to socialize again.

With time the couple moved out, and Rachel Weiner became our neighbor. She had the room to herself, which was very helpful when we became romantically involved. Later on, she went to study theater in Tel Aviv, which interrupted our relationship, until it started up again when I went to work in Tel Aviv. During that period, I had some short romances but nothing serious.

We were a young kibbutz, with the average age around 35, so many cultural activities were put on for us, including weekly film nights, visiting lecturers, and other activities. If we heard about an interesting event taking place nearby, we would go there. There was also a library on the kibbutz, which provided up-to-date newspapers every day.

I can honestly say that I was very happy with my life. I was living my dream, and the plans I had made some years ago in Brazil had come true. After having lived in four different countries during my childhood, I was drawn to the Jewish state where I could live with the bonus of enjoying kibbutz life and have the opportunity to change society. That had always been my aim — and this was the place I wanted to be.

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I kept in touch with my parents as much as possible, although maybe not as much as I should have done. My parents were in São Paulo on their own as my sister and her husband had moved to Los Angeles. At that time, my mother was 56, and my father 61, which was considered as ‘almost’ old in those days. Today of course, it is different.

Things began to change for me in 1957 when I was offered a two-year position in the management of Ichud HaNoar HaHalutzi (the new name for the Dror Youth Movement) in their Tel Aviv office.

The Kibbutz General Assembly had to give permission for somebody to leave the kibbutz’s economic activity, but it was not a problem, and I was given permission to leave my job on the kibbutz and take up a position outside. Of course, they also had to find another electrician to take my place, but by then, the job was easier as we were now connected to the national electricity grid and didn’t need a generator.

This became a happy period for me, as I found my new job very interesting, and I was pleased that Dov Tsamir, who I respected very much, was the General Secretary of the youth movement and was keen for me to come and work with him.

My life changed considerably once I took up my new role. The office was in Hayarkon Street, Tel Aviv, and Dov Tsamir and I left the kibbutz at 6 o’clock in the morning in order to get there on time. We treated ourselves to a good breakfast as soon as we arrived in Tel Aviv.

My kibbutz members were happy to receive information about what was going on in the General Kibbutz Movement, and so everyone was quite satisfied with the arrangement. We were working at that time to unify the four big youth movements in Israel, namely: Ichud HaNoar-HaHalutzi, Habonim, HaNoar HaOved and the Tnuah Meuchedet. It was a huge task, but we succeeded in merging them into one big world movement with Dov being the driving force behind it. There were four leaders of these movements working together; Dov Tsamir, Moggi Margalit, Eli Goren, and Mussa Charif. Mussa was an exceptional person, recognized by the kibbutz movement as a future national leader — possibly even a Prime Minister, but unfortunately, some years later

he and his wife died tragically in a car accident. Dov Tsamir was also seen by many people as having potential for a significant future in politics. Later on, he became a close consultant to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

One of my more interesting and important jobs was visiting other kibbutzim, often on a Saturday evening, when a General Assembly was taking place, to convince them to allow a certain man or woman to come and help our activities. We sent delegates to youth movements abroad, and if, for instance, the youth movement in Australia needed a new delegate, and we were aware that someone on Kibbutz Hagoshrim was qualified for the position, it was my job to go there and explain to the General Assembly how important it is for the future of the youth movement, that this person received permission to go to Australia. Naturally, before we spoke to the kibbutz, we had to have the candidate's agreement. By this time, I had learned to drive and had a car at my disposal.

I traveled all over the country, sometimes to the North of Galilee, Rosh Hanikra, or the Upper Galilee. Today I get lost quite easily because everything has changed so much, but then I knew exactly where to go and how to get there. Near the end of my time working there a big conference of the four youth movements was held, and they decided to unite. I was the Vice-General Secretary of the Ichud HaNoar HaHalutzi at that time and was proud to be a part of its creation.

My two years were up, and so I came back full time to the kibbutz. The usual practice when someone returned from an outside activity was to serve for several months in the dining room. This is regarded as a show of respect to your colleagues, and so for the next few months, I was in charge of arranging, preparing, and setting up the tables, as well as washing dishes. There were no dishwashers in 1959 – it was all done by hand. I felt I had washed enough dishes during that time to last me a lifetime, but after I got married, I found myself in charge of this task once again. Obviously, parallel to this, I took part in other activities, such as committees, discussions, and socializing.

After that period, another big event took place as I was asked to become the Mazkir – general administrator of the kibbutz. It is an interesting position, but also extremely difficult. It is a full-time job, and I think the best way to describe it is as a mixture between being a Rabbi and a Mayor.

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There were members of the kibbutz who were against me taking up this position, saying that because I wasn't married or didn't have children, I wouldn't be able to understand the demands of this job. The night they voted me in was difficult and amusing at the same time due to all the opposing comments. Some members argued that "How can I explain to him about problems with children?" while another nice woman asked, "Does he even know that women have periods?" Everybody laughed. In the end, a strong majority of the assembly decided that: "Jochanan can be a good Mazkir." The position was only for one year and I was happy that it wasn't for longer as it was a very difficult job.

People came to my office with a huge variety of problems ranging from looking after the roads, developing cultural activities, housing matters and other issues. There were also human problems to be dealt with, such as people wanting to move house due to issues with their neighbors, couples looking to get divorced, or someone interested in going to study, or visit family overseas. There were many other concerns — and they all ended up in the Mazkir's office. Everything had to go in front of the General Assembly, and a lot depended on whether the Mazkir and the members of the committee (Mazkirut), recommended the request. On occasions when a member had a delicate situation, someone would ask for the vote to be carried out in secret.

Unfortunately, during the year that I held that position, I also began to have some doubts about the kibbutz. There were many things that made me see my future there as problematic. I had been very naïve and idealistic, but that year showed me another reality.

One instance was when a young woman, Mariam Guenauer Bariach, came to my office early one morning, about 6.30, when I had just started working. She had her small daughter with her, and as she approached me, she threw the toddler into my arms. I took hold of the child, who by now was crying, and tried to comfort her while her mother carried on shouting at me. She had gone to the kindergarten to fetch her daughter as usual, but nobody was there to take care of the children. She was shouting at me, the little girl was sobbing in my arms, and I was completely innocent. Apparently, what had happened was that the young girl who should have taken over from the one that finished at 6.00 a.m. was late. She had waited for a short while but then lost patience and left, with her relief only arriving five minutes later. Of course, it was wrong for someone

to leave the kindergarten unsupervised, but then somehow it became the Mazkir's problem, which I had to solve, and then, of course, calm down this nice, but distraught, woman.

On another occasion somebody came running to my house in the middle of the night urging me to come quickly, because one of the men was hitting his wife. I ran there and tried to separate them, and again calm down the situation. I was also called upon to find solutions for cultural and economic problems and worked closely with the Economic Director of the kibbutz (Merakez Meshek), although we often clashed as we had different priorities. For instance, one time he was interested in buying a new tractor while I wanted to build another cultural center. The budget only allowed for one of these things, so we had to find a solution. Sometimes problems like this were taken to the General Assembly to make a decision, although during my time as Mazkir, the General Assembly often decided in my favor, causing the Economic Director, to become angry and offended, once shouting "Okay, you can take my job too!" I then had another problem to convince him to carry on in his position as he was very good at it. However, from that day on, he carried an intense animosity towards me.

It was definitely a very difficult job, but I did have fantastic assistance from Ruth Kucinski, who was the kibbutz nurse. She was a wonderful human being with excellent people skills, and she acted as my counselor on many occasions, really helping me out a lot.

During the time I was working as the Mazkir, I began to become disillusioned with kibbutz life. There were two things in particular which bothered me, although my decision to finally leave didn't take place until four years later.

During those four years, the idea slowly developed when I realized that I was living under an illusion of perfection. Humans are not perfect, and yet at one time, I thought that the kibbutz system will improve us. In reality, of course, it didn't go exactly like that, and I began to see how people took advantage of their relationships and used protection to get the jobs they wanted, even if there was somebody else more suitable.

There were other things that bothered me — smaller issues that showed up human characteristics of envy, gossip, of hostility, as well as sympathy and love.

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These human elements interfered all the time, and I found it increasingly difficult to accept what was happening.

Before I left, I had some very interesting talks with Dov Tsamir, who tried his best to convince me not to leave, telling me, "Jochanan, you are a cultured person. You've read Shakespeare. You didn't find this all out before?" I agreed that I did know these things before, but naively I had thought that these traits would disappear in a kibbutz setting and that we would all behave in a better manner.

The second issue which affected me was the social justice problem, as I believed that the kibbutz system would operate in an egalitarian way. At that time, our kibbutz was entering a very prosperous period, although that became problematic later on. One example of how I saw that we were not all equal was that on Bror Chail, all members received 12 days holiday per year, which was considered a luxury. Five minutes up the road from us was another kibbutz, Or HaNer, where they were going through a very bad period financially and only gave their members four days holiday per year.

I began to ask myself where the justice was in this as they were also part of our kibbutz movement. We belonged to the same movement, but actually, we were not being treated equally. I had been under the illusion that all of us lived more or less under the same system. I had believed I was partners with all the thousands of members in kibbutzim throughout the country. Suddenly I discovered that I am only in partnership with the 200 chaverim (members) of Bror Chail, and the awareness of this reality disturbed me greatly.

This realization added to my belief that maybe I was not suitable for kibbutz life after all and that I should concentrate on partnerships only with my own family.



Everyone admits that love is wonderful and necessary, yet no one agrees on just what it is.

Diane Ackerman

Our Wedding – Starting a Family

During the period that I held the position of kibbutz secretary, many of us decided that for economic reasons, it wasn't enough to just be active in agriculture and that we needed something more. My friend, Ervin Semmel, was chosen to investigate a good enterprise that we could invest in, which would help the kibbutz's economic development. He found a project that involved buying vegetables locally, dehydrating them before selling the products to food industries in Israel and abroad. We had some excellent customers in Israel, such as Osem, Vita, and others, while abroad we worked with large clients, including Nestlé, Knorr, and CVC in California. We named the industry Deco.



*Bror Chail –
our factory Deco*

It became extremely successful, with the company eventually exporting over one million dollars' worth of goods per year, which at that time, was a huge amount of money. When my term as secretary came to an end, Ervin, who was Director-General of the business, asked me (with the Assembly's approval) to join the company, and from 1961-1964 my position, together with Ervin, was Vice Director-General. I was responsible for the company's economic growth and exports, which meant I had to be in Tel Aviv during the week. I found myself a room in Rudi Cohn's apartment, a friend of my parents from Bielsko. It was near the office as I worked long hours and lived partly on the kibbutz and partly in Tel Aviv, which slowly created a distance between myself and the kibbutz.

At the same time, Ervin and I decided that we wanted to study economics and were accepted into Tel Aviv University. We attended lectures for approximately eight months, but the company took up too much of our time, with issues that demanded our constant attention, and we eventually had to stop.

During this period, I developed a very close romantic relationship with the young girl I mentioned before, Rachel Weiner. We were together for over two years and even decided to get married, but then at some point, we both got the feeling that we should live separately. We did, however, remain very good friends.

At the beginning of 1964, I eventually reached the decision that I was going to leave the kibbutz and begin to live my life privately. It wasn't an easy decision, and I didn't have any money behind me, but I was young and optimistic and was sure I would find my way.

Before I announced my final decision, I had a long conversation with my friend and mentor Dov Tsamir, who told me that my ideological reasons for leaving were not valid, but I did not accept his way of looking at life and decided to go ahead with my decision to leave. In those days, members who left the kibbutz were given a very symbolic payment, which was only enough to live on for some weeks. It's an entirely different system today, and people leaving a kibbutz are entitled to a lot more. In 1964, all I received was the nominal amount and good luck wishes. Even though I left, it is important for me to state that the ten years at Bror Chail were some of the best years of my life, and today the memories of my time there always bring me good feelings.

OUR WEDDING - STARTING A FAMILY

My parents invited me to come to visit them, so, in March 1964, I boarded a plane for Brazil. Like parents all over the world, they wanted me to be nearby, and they thought that now I had left the kibbutz and I was coming to visit, there was a chance I would stay in Brazil. I think they hoped that Israel had just been an adventure and that I would go back to university. That wasn't the case at all. In 1964 I was 33 years old and knew in my mind that I wanted to live in Israel but in a city rather than a kibbutz. I had already organized a small one-room apartment to rent, known in Israel as *dirat gag*, (roof apartment) before I left for Brazil.

I stayed with my parents from March until the end of May, which turned out to be an extraordinary period. The president-elect Janio Quadros resigned, as opposition to his ideas was too strong. The Vice President João Goulart took office, and to overcome the opposition in line with his own very leftist initiatives, he began to organize support in the army. However, half of the army revolted against him, and there was danger of a civilian military war. Brazilians have a unique sense of humor, and the troops from the North called the General in the South and told him: "We have nine divisions ready to fight against you." The General replied: "OK, we have only five divisions — so you win. The country is yours." After this, the army was in power for many years, which weren't the best or happiest years for Brazil as it meant the people were under quite a harsh dictatorship.

The Brazilian Jewish community was worried about what would happen in the future, while Jews in other South American countries wanted to invest in Israel. Some friends, mainly Fiszal Czeresnia who was a member of a very rich family, invited me to be a member of the administration of this new enterprise. It would mean that I could go back to Israel and become the Director, of the firm known as Amid. I met a group of South American investors who put together a substantial amount of money, and I became the General Manager, on the understanding that Fiszal would take over that role when he arrived in Israel. I would then become the Vice General Manager.

After I left Brazil, I had a short trip to America, arriving first in New York for the first time where EXPO was taking place, which was wonderful. I had a cousin, Ernie, who was living in New Jersey, and he invited me to stay. I was

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there for three nights, but it became difficult as he was in the middle of divorce proceedings. I also felt that New Jersey was too far out for me. One night I went to see a performance of Hamlet in Central Park, with some friends from the Brazilian Embassy. It finished at midnight, which meant that I missed the bus to New Jersey and had to wait almost two hours for the next one. That helped me decide to move.

I had been invited to stay in an apartment that belonged to a very nice young Israeli painter, a friend of some friends of mine. It took courage to accept this invitation and when I arrived at his apartment I got a terrible shock. It was full of paintings with hardly any space to move. He quickly organized a bed (I discovered it was his bed and refused to take it. He insisted so firmly that I ended up accepting it, and he slept on the floor). He removed the paintings that were in a tub in the middle of the bathroom so that I could shower. His kindness and attention were fantastic. He also took me to the Guggenheim Museum, and due to his explanations, I viewed everything with new eyes. I went again the next day alone to repeat the feeling.

One night when I arrived back at the apartment, the door was locked, but he had told me the key will be behind the toilet in the corridor. I looked for it, but it wasn't there. I went down to the street to phone him — no answer. I had no choice but to walk around and phone him every now and then. At that time there were plenty of public phones around, as obviously cell phones did not yet exist. Finally, I got hold of him and he apologized and told me that he had forgotten. He was in New Jersey but assured me he would come back and leave the key behind the toilet in about one hour. We lived near 42nd street and while I was waiting, I went to see a movie. After two minutes, I understood my error. The movie house was just an excuse for sex activities, and immediately I received various offers from both boys and girls. As quickly as possible I left and walked around until finally there was a key. The next day he told me he was with his girlfriend, and it was only when he was taking off his trousers that he felt the key in his pocket and came back. He showed a lot of kindness during the time I was there, and I hope he had success with his paintings.

After New York I went to spend time with Marietta who had recently given birth to a lovely little girl called Caren. She and her husband Rufus were living

OUR WEDDING - STARTING A FAMILY

in Los Angeles, and we enjoyed the time we spent together. We went out, traveled around, and visited some museums etc. They lived in a very small apartment at the time, so I stayed in a hotel nearby and late at night – Los Angeles does not sleep – I walked around. Sometime later Marietta and Rufus bought a nice house in Silver Lake.

On my return to Israel, I began working for the investment company. Several million dollars had been transferred to Israel, and I was authorized by the company to move large amounts of money from one bank to another, according to the best available conditions. I began to look for investment opportunities and received a salary straight away. My experience as kibbutz secretary had stood me in good stead, as it proved I had a good understanding of dealing with the public. In addition, I had gained valuable economic experience working with Deco and had been living in Israel for ten years, so I understood how things worked here. I was still very connected to South America, and therefore I was the ideal candidate to be in charge of this concern until my friend Fiszal and his family made Aliyah.

It was now 1964, and I was living in Tel Aviv in my small apartment on the 4th floor of a building, just one street away from Dizengoff Square, and was busy running the company. I rented offices for us, in the very new El Al building, which at the time was one of the best buildings in town. Being a young country, Israel didn't have the economic activity it has today, and this new company with money to invest was sought out by many people who gave us ideas about where to invest. Some of the suggestions were accepted by our board in South America, while others waited until Fiszal came later in the year. As soon as he arrived, we started working together. We were very active and made various investments. We bought a large building in Dizengoff Square and sold it very quickly, resulting in an excellent profit. We also purchased four big trucks for ready concrete used in the building industry (Israbeton) and invested in Judith Miller's perfume. The company also built an apartment building on the corner of Dizengoff and Arlozorov. I stayed in my position in Amid from 1964 until the beginning of 1968.

A very funny incident happened during this period. The previous tenant of my "roof" was Mark Segal, a journalist who worked for the Jerusalem Post. He was

their political correspondent, very serious and well informed. We became friends and I learned a great deal of interesting information about Israeli politics. Mark was gay and suffered when one of his boyfriends left him. We used to have coffee together, and he almost cried telling me his problems. One night — around 2 or 3 in the morning, somebody banged on my apartment door. I opened it, and a soldier pushed past me shouting, “Where is Mark?” He checked the whole apartment, even inside the cupboards but didn’t find anybody and asked me if I know where Mark lived. I did know but didn’t tell him. The soldier had his gun with him, and I did not want to be responsible for any violence if he had found Mark with a new partner. Jealousy — the green devil — is very dangerous. Sadly, Mark died soon after we went to Brazil. He was one of the first victims of Aids.

Although my days were very busy, my evenings were free, but I had no desire to start studying again. I enjoyed seeing friends and had a couple of girlfriends during that period. I occasionally visited my old kibbutz, but there was a certain distance now, as many of the members felt that as I had left, I had somehow let them down. My real friends there of course were pleased to see me and even today — almost 60 years later I can go to Bror Chail and feel very comfortable there.

I stayed in close contact with Ervin, who was now married to Mitzi. Other close friends in those days were Benjamin and Chana Reicher and Jose and Eugenia Etrog. These were my six Brazilian friends, all married couples — except for me. Ervin didn’t have children yet but went on to have three wonderful daughters.

I had a romance with a very nice Algerian woman who taught French at the French Embassy. We were together for about a year but then separated. I definitely improved my French during that time.

Then something happened to me that became one of the main highlights of my life. I was at the Habima Theater watching a French group called *Compagnons de la Chanson*. It was an amazing group, and during the interval, I was introduced to a young girl called Carmela. Somehow, from that first moment, I felt completely captivated by Carmela’s eyes. I didn’t know at the time that she actually couldn’t see me very well because she needed glasses but didn’t like wearing them when she went out. Although that was the first time we met,

Carmela couldn't see exactly who she was dealing with. I joke that maybe she 'saw' a dream prince. Carmela Satchi was originally from Sofia, Bulgaria, and arrived in Israel in 1949 at the age of eight, and initially lived in a ma'abara (provisional camps for new immigrants). I had gone to the show with another Brazilian friend, Rachel Chaitchik — not a girlfriend, and Carmela was with a boyfriend. This young man who was probably very nice, became a family joke. He worked at the National blood bank for one of the Medical Centers and I always say that I saved Carmela from a vampire!!

After the show, the four of us went out for coffee. She was interested in some financial information, and I immediately told her that I would check it out for her. I called her some days later to say that I had found all the information she needed but that I couldn't explain it over the phone. Carmela told me that she was coming to my office, but I quickly replied, "Don't come here. There is too much going on around here." In fact, that was a lie as the office was very quiet, but I really wanted to take her out. So, we met, went out for coffee, and I gave her the information she needed. It was about a share that her father had received as compensation for selling something from his shop. The share had no value, except for the fact that it helped me succeed in getting this fantastic woman to agree to marry me. That was also quite an undertaking, as this took place during November 1965, and we were married on February 28th, 1966. We only knew each other for three months, and during that time, there were two or three weeks when she said she had no time to see me. Until this day, I don't know how or why it occurred as it did — but that's how it happened. Maybe, just maybe, I was helped by another friend's nice car. I sometimes asked Reuven Ron to exchange cars with me, as mine was a small Opel Cadet and he had a large Ford, which I felt was much more accommodating in which to go out with Carmela. In mid-January, I invited her to join me for an excursion to Masada. At that time, there was no elevator to the top, so we had to go up on foot. We were with another couple, Rachel (the same Brazilian girl) and her boyfriend. Luckily for me, Rachel was not feeling well, so they decided not to climb up but to stay in the restaurant at the bottom of the mountain while we made the trek up Masada. Carmela had been an officer in the army and was 10 years younger than the old immigrant she was with, who possibly had already lost a little of his hair, but strangely, during the last part of the climb, the old immigrant helped the young officer of the Israeli army reach the top. My wife still says that's not

CHAPTER 9



*February 28th, 1966 -
Our wedding*



Bulgarian family at our wedding



*Left to Right:
Carmela's
brother and
sister, my
cousin Eva and
her husband
Gershon on
the right with
their two small
daughters.*



*Left to Right:
Fiszel Czeresnia,
Mitsi and Ervin
Semel, Jochanan,
Carmela and
Rosa Czeresnia*



*Carmela and I
with my parents
in Brazil.*

true — but the truth is I helped her reach the top of the mountain. Anyway, there we were at the top of Masada, and I told her that I was going to Brazil for work and that I would very much like it if she came with me. She said, “How can I come with you?” to which I replied, “Marry me!” We were already involved romantically, and it seemed to me, that it was the obvious next step to take, so I was ecstatically happy when she replied, “Yes. I’ll marry you.” There we were on January 15th, 1966, when this fantastic woman agreed to be my wife and is still — 56 years later. Another family joke, maybe there is some truth in it, is that due to the height on top of Masada, there was less oxygen and that could have had a certain influence on Carmela’s reply, since her mind was not clear enough to think properly.

We had not been together very long and so the first time her parents met me, was when we told them that we were going to get married. We arranged the wedding for February 28th, 1966, in a place in Tel Aviv, which does not exist anymore. It was especially for soldiers and although Carmela had finished her army period and was studying at Bar Ilan University for her Chemistry MA, as an officer (Lieutenant), she was entitled to use this place. It was a nice modest event hall situated on the corner of Ibn Gvirol and David Hamelech. Unfortunately, my parents were not able to come. Traveling then was not as easy as it is today, and neither was communication. When we had written to tell my parents about the wedding, they were away on holiday, and therefore we didn’t get any reaction to our news. We sent another cable — still no response. I eventually phoned them, but there was no answer. I didn’t know that they were away on vacation, and after not receiving any reply about our upcoming wedding, my dear Carmela said, “Apparently, your parents do not want to accept me. I’m not going to marry you if your parents don’t want me in the family.” Luckily, when they returned from their vacation and saw our messages, they immediately sent us a very nice congratulatory telegram and then phoned us as well.

Carmela became very friendly with Rosa, Fiszal’s wife and was very fond of both their daughters, Tamara and Yara. Rosa organized a reception for all my friends to meet Carmela, and Mimi, Carmela’s best friend, arranged for me to meet Carmela’s friends.

At the wedding, Carmela’s parents walked her to the Chupa, and I was accompanied by Fiszal and Rosinha. We had approximately 150 guests at our

wedding, many of them Carmela's relatives and members of the Bulgarian community. During the war, the Bulgarians had not allowed the Nazis to kill Jews, and therefore the Jewish community had survived. When the Communist regime came into power, they gave the Jews two options for the future. They were told that they could stay but stop 'the nonsense of religion and capitalism' or go to Israel. About 90% of the Bulgarian community were attracted to the idea of living in Israel and having a country of their own. There was always a very strong Zionist feeling among Bulgarian Jews, and this ultimatum encouraged them to make Aliyah, mostly in 1949. Carmela's father had six or seven siblings, and there were three on her mother's side. They were all married, with children, meaning that there were probably 80 members of Carmela's family at our wedding. That was fantastic, of course, but very different from my side as there were only five or six members of my family in attendance. As our family had been devastated by the Holocaust, I only had one cousin in Haifa who was able to come with her husband. This was the cousin who was saved as a child by Teta, the non-Jewish woman in Poland. I also had another two couples who were from our city in Poland, Bielsko, who were friends of my parents, and of course, we had our friends there, as well as some people connected to Amid Investment Company.

One of the important work-related people who had become a friend, was Dr. David Herman, our lawyer. I also knew him from the kibbutz when we started up our business there, with a Swiss partner, called Wolfgang Masser. Dr. Herman had helped us a great deal in organizing the contract with him. Herman liked Ervin and me, taught us a lot, and helped with many business problems. I am grateful to him for a great deal of my knowledge of working in Israel. He also taught me something else, which is a minor detail but is still true today. Dr. Herman taught us how to drink and like liqueurs. From that time, I always have Cointreau and Grand Marnier at home.

We received nice modest wedding presents such as vases, dinner plates and other household items from our more formal guests. Our personal friends and family gave us checks, as is the custom here to help a young couple establish itself. However, we did have a strange and disagreeable incident with a man called Simon. He was a contractor, and he told me a couple of days before, that he couldn't come to the wedding, but said: "I want to give you a present" and handed me a check for 5000 Israeli lira (about \$1,500). This was before the shekel came into being. It was a huge amount of money at the time and too much for us

to accept. It wasn't logical either to give that amount of money for a wedding present. Usually, someone would send approximately 200, or possibly 500, if they were particularly generous. However, to offer me a check for that amount of money was extremely exaggerated and put me in an awkward position. I told Simon that I couldn't accept it, and explained that I felt it wasn't moral, as I was the Company Director and we employed him to work for us. He wasn't happy with my reaction but also didn't attempt to give us any other present, even something small that could be regarded as just a token of his good wishes. We were still working with him two years later when our lawyer had to intervene in a court case as Simon owed us money. Later we also heard that he was in jail because he falsified a bank document, changing \$5000 to \$500,000. Imagine if I had accepted a present of 5000 Israel liras from him? Naturally, I was relieved that I hadn't got involved with him and had not accepted his check. I would like to think that today public employees and government personnel behave in the same way.

We have some great photographs of our wedding as well as a short film taken by John Barnard, Rachel Weiner's (my ex-girlfriend) husband.

The day after the wedding, our first job was to go to the Ministry of Interior to change Carmela's family name to Drucker — I wasn't called Dekel yet. At that time, 1966, it wasn't acceptable for a man and a woman to be in the same hotel guestroom if they weren't married and we had planned a honeymoon in France and Spain, and I didn't want there to be any problems. We changed Carmela's name successfully, and two days after our wedding we flew to Paris. We spent one wonderful week there, and it was like a dream. We went to the theater, saw a night show, visited some museums, and enjoyed some time by ourselves. We went to the Crazy Horse, Moulin Rouge, and an enjoyable opera. After Paris, we traveled to Madrid and stayed there for a few days, before moving to Seville.

We had an incident in Madrid that I have never forgotten. We were walking down a small street when I noticed the entrance to what seemed to me to be a simple restaurant. It was called Portillon, and I realized my mistake the minute we walked in and saw that it was a super elegant restaurant. The moment we entered, two employees took our coats and helped us to sit down. A waiter brought water to the table together with some house wine. We were traveling

on a very modest budget as we had just got married, and I had not long left the kibbutz — we were not in a very comfortable financial situation. This was definitely a restaurant well beyond our means, but I was too embarrassed to tell my new wife that I had made a mistake and we had to leave. I had to save face and we more or less spent our week's budget in that restaurant. We had a very good meal there, and for years afterward, I kept a glass and an ashtray with the name of the restaurant engraved on it as souvenirs.

From Seville, where we stayed at the beautiful Hotel Inglaterra, we went on to Malaga and then back to Madrid, and from there flew to Brazil. By now, it was the middle of March, and we arrived in São Paulo, where my parents received us very enthusiastically and took us to their house. They were immediately enchanted by Carmela, and she was delighted with them as well. I had some free days in São Paulo to be with my wife, but I had come to Brazil to work and started contacting our investors. We stayed in Brazil for nearly two months, and it was partly working and partly honeymoon. During our stay, my mother surprised me once again by giving us some good and useful advice about marriage.

When I was working, Carmela was free to do what she wanted and she traveled around and began to learn Portuguese mainly with taxi drivers, who are very nice in Brazil as they talk to you. It is not like in other countries, especially Germany, where not only do they not speak to you, but they also hardly even look at you. Brazilian taxi drivers are happy to talk to their customers, and Carmela began her Brazilian Portuguese adventure. We found time to go to Rio de Janeiro for some days, as well as to a small island, Paquetá, where cars are not allowed — only bicycles. What a pleasure! We stayed in a good hotel, Gloria, and enjoyed our days walking around and sitting by the sea. We went back to São Paulo after that, and I spent a few more days working before we went to Guarujá and stayed in a beautiful sea front apartment that belonged to my wonderful and good friend Oswaldo Wolff. He had built a very nice building there consisting of eight floors with a hotel and four floors of apartments.

We traveled back from Brazil to Israel in May 1966 and stopped in Bulgaria to stay with Carmela's uncle Shlomo and Tante Lisa. My wife is a very impatient person, and when the plane was near Sofia, she put her chair up and fastened her seat belt, saying, "OK, we can land." I began to laugh and told her that we

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weren't near enough to land, and they hadn't even told us to put on our seat belts yet, but she was ready. We still laugh about it today.

Her family was waiting for us at the airport, and we went back to their house. Bulgaria in 1966 was a very poor and primitive country, still dominated by Soviet Union. The Russians had saved Bulgaria from the Ottoman Empire and the horrible German occupation, and the Bulgarians were very thankful to Soviet Union for this, but as a result, they were exploited and were robbed of many riches, which left the country in a poor state. They didn't even have toilet paper in the bathroom but used pieces of cut-up newspaper. I sometimes made comments against the regime, which was very severe during those days, and potentially dangerous. I was immediately stopped when I made such remarks because they were afraid that somebody would hear. The other relatives had all made Aliya, but this uncle did not want to leave the Communist regime, although I think later, when it fell, he probably felt a little betrayed and frustrated. I confess that when I left the kibbutz, I also felt quite frustrated. I decided ideologically that I had to leave, but it was frustrating because the kibbutz had been an ideal for me. I imagine that for Carmela's uncle, it was a similar situation. He was a Communist idealist and believed that Stalin was something near to perfection, and then when reality set in he became disappointed. When the truth came out about the Communist regime, many people became quite bitter.

Our trip was over, and we returned to Israel and went to live in our nice apartment on Ruth Street near the Dizengoff Center. The apartment was small, but we had use of the whole roof. Carmela was still studying and working at Bar Ilan University, doing research, and finishing her Master of Science degree. I had my office in the El Al building, and together with Fizel, carried on looking for investments for the company. Life was good. We were busy, happy, and hopeful about the future.



There never was a good war
or a bad peace.

Benjamin Franklin

Settling Down

Carmela was at Bar Ilan University, finishing her MSc. (Master of Science) in chemistry and she also began to work as an assistant in Tel Aviv University, and part time in the Civil Atomic Reactor in Yavne, in industrial use of irradiation. I was working with the investment company, Amid. Carmela sometimes worked very late, and we only had one car, so I drove to work and then went to wait for Carmela. As it was often around 10 pm I laid on the laboratory floor and slept for an hour or so while my wife finished working, and then we drove home. Thanks to Carmela, my good friend Ervin and I were lucky enough to have a special visit to the atomic reactor in Yavne.

While we worked hard during the daytime, we also enjoyed going out in the evenings with friends. One night in 1967, we were in a night club owned by Mandy Rice-Davies, who had been part of a big scandal in the UK with Christine Keeler in the 1960s. They almost brought the British government down when Christine had an affair with John Profumo, who was the Secretary of State for War in the UK. When it was revealed that Christine had another lover who was a Soviet diplomat and a spy (Military Attaché), Profumo came under suspicion of revealing secrets and had to resign. Mandy Rice-Davies wasn't Jewish, but she came to Israel, married, and among other businesses, opened an excellent nightclub in Ben Yehuda Street.

As I mentioned, it was 1967, just before Israel's Independence Day. We knew that there was tension rising between us and Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser, but

we were in that nightclub one night, having fun and stayed out dancing until about two in the morning. We didn't live far away, and when we got home, there was a small note on the door. I saw it was from the army, and thought it was probably a call for reserve duty and decided to read it in the morning. I put it away, and we went to bed. In the morning, when I looked at the notification properly, I was in complete shock because it was what we call in Israel tsav 8, meaning an immediate emergency call. I should have reported at 8 o'clock in the morning in front of Habima theater, but I was still reading it at home in my pajamas. Once I recovered from the shock, I immediately got dressed (not in army uniform) and drove quickly to the meeting place. I apologized to the officer and told him, "Sorry, I only just read this." He said, "Ok, we are going to Tel Nof, the military airport near Rehovot." He told me that I could drive but wouldn't be able to leave the car there, so it would be best to get somebody to take me. I went back home, had some breakfast, and then Carmela drove me to the military airport. I was a reservist in the anti-aircraft unit against enemy planes and had been called for reserve duty once before. This time I had been called for active service to defend the airport against enemy planes. We were in charge of Bofors L 40 guns, which were big and heavy, and radar equipment. At that time, the anti-aircraft service that we have today didn't exist. We were called up for security reasons on May 10th, although the Six-Day War, which was a fantastic victory for Israel, took place at the beginning of June. We were in training and getting prepared for two weeks prior to this, and then suddenly, the war began.

I know that I can act a little differently from other people at times, and my behavior in this unit was slightly unusual. We were all reservists, and I don't think I was the oldest, but most of the others had served in the regular army, whereas I had been on the kibbutz, so I had not done regular army service. At night, most of the soldiers went to sleep dressed as they were during the day. I never was able to do this — I got undressed and put on my pajamas. All my colleagues looked at me and found it quite funny. I do believe that it really was! We were in the army. We were in a state of emergency. We could be called at any minute during the night, and Mr. Jochanan was in his pajamas. So, ok, there was no law against it. I slept very well in a very uncomfortable bed or something on the floor, in my pajamas.

The day the war began, it's well-known that our aircraft grounded and practically eliminated the Egyptian aircraft on the ground. They bombed

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the Egyptian military airports, and carried out, what they called, dogfights. Our pilots were excellent and succeeded in defeating most of the Egyptian fighters. When the fighter pilots returned to the base, they had a ritual where they flew downwards, up again, and then turned around. This showed that they had eliminated at least one or maybe more Egyptian planes.

My group was trained to defend the airport against enemy attacks. We were in charge of three canons, the generator, and one piece of radar equipment, and our job was, to identify if an enemy plane approached, and then bring it down. There were connecting wires, and someone had to be near the canon, with another person sitting on the canon in order to shoot. The jobs were interchangeable — but no enemy planes came in sight, so we didn't ever need to shoot.

During one of our practice exercises near Netanya, a month earlier, one of the officers had a special emergency device that he could press to stop everything. One time he pressed this device and began to shout at one of my colleagues who was on the canon looking to find the right place to shoot. The officer told him to get down off the canon, yelling, "You don't know what you are doing!" This soldier, instead of looking for the banner that we were supposed to shoot at, had pointed the canon towards one of our planes. During practice we had to shoot at the banner, but it seemed this soldier was daydreaming, and was aiming at an Israeli aircraft. Luckily, the officer saw and pressed the emergency button, preventing a terrible incident.

Before this, we had been taught to identify various planes. They are all built in a different way, so we had a kind of air-reconnaissance to know if it was a friendly or enemy plane approaching. I don't think we were specialists, but we went through different exercises to help us identify the planes.

On the first day, we were busy training, and we were all sitting on the canon. We were absolutely ready. The canon was covered in green so that it looked like part of the vegetation and we had green plants stuck in our helmets as camouflage. Suddenly, I saw a car coming toward us and stop near the barbed wire that separated us from the road. I watched as a nice young girl got out of the car and walked towards the barbed wire. I obviously got a shock when I realized that this nice young girl was my wife. You can imagine, there were 30 or 40 soldiers all looking at this attractive creature in a mini dress, with very

nice legs. Everyone was looking, and I was saying to myself, "I want to die now." Obviously, I went to the officer, and I said, "Can I go over there? That's my wife." He began to laugh and said, "Yes, of course." My wife was an officer in the army, so she could get permission to come near to the airport, and she knew where I was because she had brought me here on my first day. I went to meet her, and because she knew more than we did about what was going on, she was able to update me. I learned that on the first morning, approximately 500 Egyptian planes had been shot down. We spoke for a short while, then she left. When I came back, all the soldiers began to applaud. It was very funny, a little embarrassing, but it still is a nice memory today.

We stayed there until early July, and during that time I phoned Carmela and asked her to prepare our passports, as we had arranged with my parents to meet them at the beginning of August in Switzerland. Carmela told me, "You are crazy. We are in the middle of a war." I replied that the war was over, and even though I was still in the army, I was optimistic that it would be OK. In 2020, when we were going through the Corona crisis, I still said, "Let's be optimistic that sometime soon we will be OK again."

Of course, I had no way of knowing at the time, but my parents who had been traveling in Europe since the beginning of June, were having a very hard time with regard to finding out what was really happening here. They spent about three weeks in Austria in a nice place near Salzburg and then moved on to Paris. They were there when the Six-Day War broke out, and Israel, for security reasons, had made a complete black-out of the news. Unfortunately, the Egyptian coverage in Paris was horrible, and they were indicating that Israel was being destroyed. One of the news items they showed was the burning of a large commercial building. A couple of years earlier, the building used by the maritime company Zim on Rothschild Boulevard had completely burnt down. Obviously, there were photos of the burning building at the time, and Egyptian media published these photos in June 1967, telling the French public, "You see, we are destroying Israel. We are burning Tel Aviv." My parents were in Paris when they heard this news, and of course, were horrified and had no way to contact us to find out how we were. My mother went to sleep that night, and in the morning, when she woke up, she saw a vast amount of her hair on the pillow. The shock had caused her to lose her hair overnight. It took some days until the news came out that Israel was

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fine, and nothing had happened here. Sadly, we lost some soldiers, which of course, was tragic.

Carmela was very efficient, and by the time I came home all our paperwork was ready, and we flew to Flims, near Chur which is a fantastic place – one of the nicest in Switzerland. I took some vacation time from work – I was a Director of the company, so it wasn't a problem, even though I had been away in the army for 1½ months. For the few weeks in between the army and leaving for Switzerland, I had gone to the office every day.

We went to Flims, and my parents had also invited my sister, her husband, and their small daughter. When I was alone in Brazil in 1964, I visited my sister in Los Angeles who had recently had a baby – and now she was 3½ years old. Caren was a lovely little girl, and we had a lot of fun playing with her. We stayed in a lovely hotel called Flims Waldhaus, and my parents had organized it so that they had a week with Marietta and her family, then one week of us all together. When Marietta went back to America, Carmela and I were alone with my parents. We all enjoyed two wonderful weeks together that I will never forget. It was a real pleasure to be with my parents. They were both well and in good spirits. It took us another 49 years to return to Flims on our 50th wedding anniversary, which was very enjoyable, and we were able to reminisce about our last time there.

After my parents left, I arranged for Carmela and me to fly to Venice for a surprise trip. When we arrived at our modest hotel, we had to use the staircase to take our luggage up to our room. Carmela complained a little bit about why we were doing this as she had no idea how wonderful Venice was. The next morning, she saw the most fantastic view out of our bedroom window, (as intended when I made the reservation) and was flabbergasted. We had breakfast that morning in Piazza de San Marco surrounded by the beautiful buildings and pigeons. By this time, my dear wife had forgotten the stairs and was more than enchanted with Venice.

After three days I had to return to work and Carmela left for Belfast, to visit her best friend, Dafna, who lived there with her husband. Later Dafna, Jackie and their lovely daughters, Michal and Debby returned to Israel. After Belfast,

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Carmela went to Knokke (Belgium) to meet her other best friend — Mimi. She enjoyed her adventures but was happy to return to 4 Ruth Street where we lived.

When we left Switzerland (the ‘Cheese Empire’), we bought a selection of good cheeses to take home with us. The refrigerator in our kitchen was very small, so I asked Carmela’s parents if we could use theirs. Rachel and Gavriel were always the kindest people you could hope to meet and obviously said yes. One evening after Carmela came back from her travels, we took a delicious loaf of bread and a bottle of wine to their house to have a “cheese and wine” dinner. Carmela’s father looked at us a little embarrassed and said they were very sorry, but the cheese had all gone bad, and they had thrown it away. He added that even the cats did not like it. Unfortunately, having no experience with Swiss cheese, they didn’t know that these cheeses (we had brought five or six different types) do smell and is a sign of their high quality. This is another family story that still makes us laugh.

We had known for some time that the apartment where we were living was too small for us. The kitchen was minuscule, so we ate outside on the roof as much as we could, but even in that tiny space, Carmela created some fantastic dishes for us. It is still amazing what she can do with cakes! We wanted a family, but it wouldn’t be possible to have a child in that apartment. We started thinking about where we could live. Fiszal Czeresnia, my partner, had more money behind him and had shares in the company, which I could not afford. I didn’t have money to invest, but I did have a Director’s share, which was very important. He and his family were in partnership with a large Israeli builder called Rubinstein, and were building in Holon, in an area called Neot Rachel. They were practically financing one of the new buildings there, and he was living in a lovely four-room apartment. He offered one of these apartments to me at an agreeable price, as well as easy repayments.

I wanted to buy it, but Carmela didn’t want to live in Holon. This wasn’t because of Fiszal, or because of the building, she just didn’t want to be South of Tel Aviv. Carmela was working at Bar Ilan University, and my office was in the center of the city in Beit El Al. Even in 1967, traffic in the morning around Tel Aviv was difficult to deal with and Carmela said we should never have to enter the city from the South. We began to look in Tel Aviv itself, which was a crazy idea, because the apartments we found were three rooms, not four, and at the back of the buildings.

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The views were fantastic — to see your neighbor's underwear hanging on the line to dry. Even with this 'wonderful' view, they cost approximately US\$80,000 with half the amount, required in cash. We didn't have US\$30,000, we didn't even have US\$20,000, so it wasn't an option.

We were introduced to a real estate agent (metavech), called Lancet. He asked us: "Do you mind living in a house outside of Tel Aviv?" We said, "No. How are the roads? Is it easy to travel?" He told us, "Well, the road is narrow, but it is a good road. There is a bus service, United Tours, which runs the whole week, Saturdays too." The fact that United Tours ran on Saturdays was very good for Carmela because her parents lived in Ramat Gan, and they didn't have a car. So, if there was transport to Herzliya, they could come to visit us even at weekends. This sounded very good to us, so we went with Lancet to a place which was called a development area (Ezor Pituach). In other words, it was a zone where there was nothing — but it was in the process of being developed. Whichever way we looked, we just saw sand, but behind the sand was a beautiful sea. There were two hotels in this area, the Accadia, and the Sharon. There were plans for a third one, although that didn't come about till much later.

The Haifa road was narrow, but it was quite good, and you could drive to Tel Aviv in about 40 minutes. He showed us four or five plots; each one was half a dunam — 500 square meters. The difference in price between there and Tel Aviv was enormous, as here we could buy a plot of land for 10% of the cost of a Tel Aviv apartment. We then needed another 30 to \$35,000 to build a house. Before we went with Mr. Lancet, we had already been to Herzliya with another metavech, and we were negotiating to buy a house there.

I am happy to say that in the end, we did not buy that property as there were legal complications. Today, the area where the plot is that we did not buy is worth 10 to 15% less than our area. After Lancet offered us the land, I went to the Herzliya municipality to look at the future plans and liked what I saw. In one direction, there wasn't a street leading directly down to the sea, and the other street finished where our house would be. Also, it stood on the top of a slight hill, and we still appreciate today, that when it rains, (in recent years the weather has changed and it rains a lot more now), the water runs down in all directions, and we have never had a flood.

We couldn't begin to imagine how our area would turn out — but it looked good for the future, as there wouldn't be too much traffic and we liked the fact that it was on a corner. At that time, there was practically nothing in the area.

Friends of ours, especially my friend Ervin, who was a very serious person, told us that we were going to live in a place where nobody else wants to go. "You are going to leave civilization," he said, "We will forget that you exist." Well, of course we did not leave civilization, and I am happy to say that for many years Ervin, his wife, and eventually all their three lovely daughters came to visit often. They didn't forget about us at all!

I must tell the story of how we bought the plot. The owner of the land, a Yemenite woman, Mazal Harari, lived in Tel Aviv. Lancet told us we should go there one evening and speak to her. There was a fixed price, which today sounds ridiculous: a few thousand dollars. Today some properties in this area are worth over one million dollars. Anyhow, we went to see her, and she was in the apartment with her two sons. They welcomed us nicely, but she said that we had wasted our time, as her sons did not want to sell. We stayed and had a cup of coffee with her and some pleasant conversation until it was time for us to leave. She stood up with us, and when we got to the front door, she lowered her voice and said "My sons don't want me to sell. But I want to because I want the money. I want to travel, and I am selling." We agreed to meet at 11.00 am the following day, with the money, at the tabu office (property registry), to make the transfer. She asked us not to say any more now as she didn't want her sons to know. The next day that's exactly what happened. Mazal came and transferred the land to us, and we were then the happy owners.

There was absolutely nothing in the whole area. We had to break through from our house to Rehov Hanassi, with a small tractor. The other street on the corner, Levy Eshkol, did not exist. There was just one house on this street, quite a way down, which wasn't easily accessible. We planned to build a small two-story house and found an experienced and efficient contractor — Eliahu Sternlieb. We signed the contract with him at the end of 1967 and moved in around October 1968. Ours was the first house he built and although we didn't have enough money for a whole two-story house, I asked him to lay the foundations for a complete building. From time to time the building inspectors came and measured the quantity of cement he used, the quality of his materials, and how

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Our small apartment, Ruth 4, Tel Aviv



Building our house: Sand and sea



Carmela and Jochanan's Residence 1968

much metal was involved in the construction. At one point they called our architect and told him that Eliahu was using double the amount of material required. We realized that as he didn't have experience with houses, he wanted to be sure that everything was okay, and he was using more material than necessary. The result is that today, 54 years later, our house has no cracks in it. We had a very good financial agreement as Sternlieb was in urgent need of money, so we gave him a down payment and paid back the balance (about 80% of the cost) in five yearly instalments, with no interest or linkage.

Once the building work began, I was there every morning at 7.00 and again in the evening. It was important that I did this as although Eliahu was good at his job, I sometimes arrived to see that there was a pillar where there shouldn't have been, or a window, in the wrong position, where there needed to be space for some stairs. There weren't many problems, but he fixed everything very efficiently. The Electric Company put a whole line in that I had to pay for, but then everyone else who built a house from our corner to the other street, had to reimburse me through the electricity company.

Carmela also wanted to come and see how the building was progressing. By this time, she was six months pregnant with our first baby (wonderful Iris), and she wanted to go up to see the second floor and the view. Unfortunately, the staircase hadn't been built yet and it was only a provisional structure. She began to climb up giving me a terrible shock. I shouted, "Carmela, don't go up! Don't you dare." Luckily, she agreed to come down and wait until the stairs had been built and avoided giving me a heart attack.

Between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur 1968, we moved in and have lived here ever since. These days, there is more local traffic, but not as heavy as in other streets. We didn't know the name of the street when we started building. It is called She'erit Haplita, which means those who remained after the Holocaust. In other words, it is named in honor of the survivors of World War II and to remember those who did not survive.

In the 1960s very few people wanted to come and live here. However, Herzliya Pituach, meaning Herzliya Development, is today one of the most elegant and expensive areas in Israel. Friends often ask me, why I didn't buy more land.



All our dreams can come true
if we have the courage to pursue them.

Walt Disney

Changes and New Opportunities

By the end of 1968, we had finally moved into our own home that we had watched being built. Carmela was heavily pregnant at the time, and our first child, a daughter who we named Iris, was born on January 4th, 1969.

Even with my emotional feelings of happiness and excitement, I could not ever have dreamed how much this small creature brought with her. Looking back (today, she is 54), she has given us so much joy, fun, and happiness and continues to provide us with attention and care. For us — a miracle.

Before we could move in, we stayed with one of Carmela's friends, Esther Bashi, and her mother, who lived nearby. They were very kind to us, and after two weeks we could move into our own home. We settled in quickly and became friendly with the couple who came to live in the property opposite ours. One morning someone parked near where we were standing, looking at the beginning of the construction work and asked us if we were going to build a house. When we said yes, they explained that they owned the land in front and if we were building, they would also come to live there. Their names were Moshe and Judith Azriel, and they also employed Eliahu Sternlieb to build their house. Sternlieb was very happy to have two new houses to build so close to each other. Our new neighbors lived over the road from us for 50 years until they decided in 2019 to move into a retirement home (diur mугan). They had three children and were good neighbors. Tragically the older son died in a terrible accident during one of the Lebanon wars.

As we had broken through to our house, we paid for the water and electricity line from the corner up to our property. Later on, owners of all new constructions had to reimburse us.

We felt very comfortable in our new surroundings and appreciated the horse-drawn cart that delivered milk and fresh bread to our front door at 6.00 o'clock every morning. Later in the morning, another cart arrived with a variety of fruit and vegetables, so we felt very well looked after.

In the early 70s (when we were in Brazil) the American embassy decided that this area would be very good for its employees. It was quiet and near the sea and would be attractive for people from overseas. It was also close to the embassy in Tel Aviv and, at the time, not expensive. The embassy built around 35 or 40 houses for its staff, and suddenly, this area exploded. Instead of being called Herzliya Pituach, Herzliya Development Area, it was named the "Diplomatic region." This immediately elevated the area, and as it was suitable for American diplomats, other embassies began to follow suit. The Swedish came to live here, in a rented property, followed by employees from the French and Dutch embassies. Israelis then began to recognize that this was a good area and started buying properties here too. Suddenly it became attractive to higher class people, not at all as my friend Ervin had said in the past. Of course, not everybody who lives here is high class — but they do have money. As we know, money and high class do not always go together, in the same way that a good area doesn't mean that everybody in it is agreeable.

I have an unfortunate example: there was a nice lady living nearby who had been married to a Mafia man. Sadly, he was killed, and she told everybody afterwards that she never had any connection with the Mafia. Unfortunately, they killed her anyway — the murder took place just on the next corner from where we live.

On January 4th, 1969, Carmela gave birth to our beautiful baby daughter. We had been recommended to visit Dr. Caspi (now a Professor), who had a special method to prepare women for childbirth. He instructed his patients to enter a hypnotic trance and go to sleep. My dear wife was a wonderful student and always succeeded in falling asleep immediately. We saw him privately, and he was surprised when I asked him at the beginning if he would be in Israel in

early January. He said he would be and asked why. I replied that we wanted to be sure that he was present at the birth. He was surprised, as he wasn't used to such requests, but agreed. On the evening of January 3rd, Carmela started having contractions and woke me after each one to time how far apart they were so that we knew when to go to the hospital. Carmela fell asleep again a second after waking me, although I just managed to fall back to sleep – when suddenly there was a new contraction. I slept very little that night, and around 5.00 a.m., we started to drive to the hospital. It was a Saturday, and my wife got angry with me a couple of times when I stopped at a red traffic light, as she expected me to go through it, as there was no one around, but I didn't want to take such risks and we got there safely. I had called Dr. Caspi just before we left home, and he arrived at the hospital a few minutes after us.

I was allowed to be present during the birth and witnessed a miracle. My darling Carmela gave birth under hypnosis. She slept through it all. Out of all the women in Caspi's group, only two were successful. Iris was born in Tzrifin Hospital, which was good but not very modern in those days. Carmela saw some rats outside... We didn't name Iris after anybody; we just chose the name because we liked it. We told Carmela's friends at the Bar Ilan University that if they wanted, I would stop on the way home from the hospital so that they could all come to our car to look at Iris Drucker, our new miracle. I didn't want anybody to visit our house for two weeks, as I thought it was very important that for the first month after giving birth, Carmela should take it easy, and if she didn't have enough rest, it could affect her health later on. I also employed a lady from Nof Yam called Aliza Biton to come to our house every morning and stay until late in the afternoon, which worked out very well.

So now I had a real family, a fantastic wife, and a dream daughter. One morning I stayed home, and Carmela asked me to take care of Iris. I received a full lecture as to what to do, mainly how to change diapers. I am not totally ignorant, but women do not always have a lot of trust in men. Okay, when Carmela returned after about two hours, her first question was how did you manage with Iris, with the diapers, etc.? I began to laugh and said I asked Iris nicely to sleep a little longer, and she agreed to only wake up after Carmela arrived home. From that day on I always had a wonderful connection to our marvelous daughter.

Things were changing for me, however, in my work life. Amid had been extremely successful during 1965, even though after the Six-Day War, Israel's economy entered a depression. We had been very lucky for a new company and had made an excellent profit on a building we sold to an insurance company. 1966 however, was not such a good year. We made a symbolic profit, but it wasn't very big, and the following year proved to be even worse. We had two or three big investors worth several hundred thousand dollars, but we also had a group of smaller investors with less than \$50,000. One of these small investors was having financial problems and asked us for his money back. We couldn't do that as the money was invested in shares, and he would have made a substantial loss. He responded that he would take the company to court. Nobody wanted this of course, so, the two leading investors decided to close the company. Looking back, it was a great pity as we were in a good position, with some good investments and every opportunity to become a very successful enterprise. My friend Fiszel and I had to hand the company's reins over to the auditor, who sold everything we had. I think basically, most of our investors broke even or maybe suffered a minimal loss. It did, however, also mean that I now had to go and look for another job.

I felt awful about it all as I had been under the impression that I would be at Amid for many years. I was good at it and on good terms with my partners in Israel. I enjoyed the challenge of looking for new investments and controlling the existing ones, but suddenly it was all finished. It was also quite difficult for Fiszel as he had planned to have Amid as his occupation here. His wife suffered from a period of depression, and after some time they returned to São Paulo.

At about the same time, I was contacted by a Brazilian acquaintance, Rolf Simon, who owned a jewelry business with six shops in Israel. He was having a problem as somebody from his management team had stolen many valuable stones, including diamonds, topaz, aquamarine, and emeralds. Their value was around US\$300,000, and the company was in trouble. Simon asked me to be in charge, control what was happening, and ensure that it didn't happen again. Suddenly I was in the middle of a jewelry company.

The business had been going well until the jewels were stolen, leaving the company very undercapitalized. Simon had a partner, a very wealthy man, and he asked the partner to invest, but he replied that he would only invest if

Simon did as well. This was a problem as he didn't have any money at that time. So, here I was in charge of a company with no capital. I was there for a year and learned a lot about jewelry and found it fascinating to discover the value of precious stones and buying jewels from different places. We bought mainly topaz and amethyst from South America, opals from Asia, and diamonds and emeralds from other places. One of the perks of being in such a company was that I could buy my wife some beautiful jewelry pieces at cost price. There is a big risk in the jewelry business that part of your stock can remain unsold for a long time, so to avoid loss, the difference between cost and the retail price is at least double.

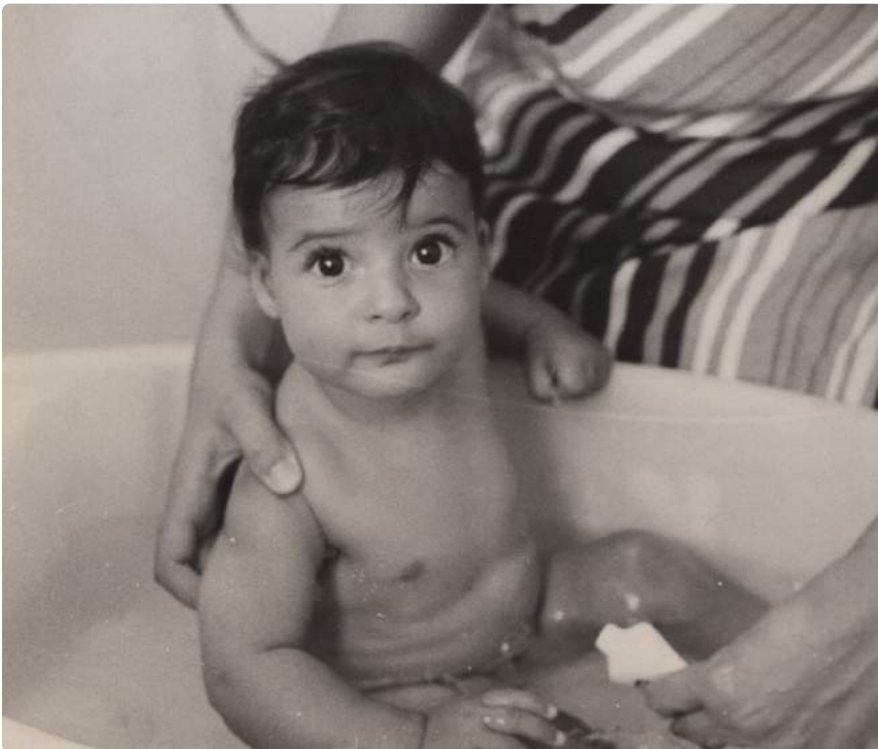
However, although I enjoyed it, I realized from the beginning that my position there wouldn't last very long. Sure enough, after about six or seven months we had to tell Mr. Simon that the company couldn't continue without any capital invested. He sold the company to the owners of the Dan Hotels — the Federmann family. Most of the stores were located in the hotels owned by the Federmann group: Dan Tel Aviv, Dan Accadia, and in Dan Carmel, Haifa. There were another two, one in the center of Tel Aviv and one in Jerusalem. The Federmanns were smart to buy the company at a low price and later made an excellent profit.

Once again, I had to look for another job, but being young, optimistic, and experienced in various fields, I believed that everything would work out. As it happens, the Chamber of Commerce Israel-Brazil approached me to become secretary of the Chamber of Commerce in Israel. They wanted to make the organization more influential and to attract new members. I agreed although it was a part-time job, and not very well paid. Soon after I started there, the Brazilian Minister of Housing, an important ex-general, visited Israel. Being in charge, I had various meetings with him, and on one occasion, I suggested that he use Solel Boneh or one of their subsidiary companies to build in Brazil. He said that he would consider it as a possibility. I remember him joking that because of the enormous difference in our populations (Israel had about 3 million citizens in 1969), Brazil built the equivalent of a new Israeli state every year.

I was earning significantly less than before and became quite concerned, as we had to make monthly payments for the house and cover other expenses. Sometimes when I was at home on my own sitting on the sofa in our living



Moving to Herzliya



Baby Iris

room, I just thought about how we would manage. Suddenly, I received three offers to go abroad and represent Israel. At that time, anyone who had been in a high position on a Kibbutz and knew other languages was in high demand. There was a joke at the time, that someone like me had a BK — a Boger Kibbutz, meaning a Kibbutz title.

The first offer was an interesting idea from the Histadrut, to go to Chile, and become the United Nations for Cooperation representative. I knew the language, I knew how to talk to people, and because of my kibbutz experience, I understood about socialist organizations. At the time, the President of Chile, Salvador Allende, a socialist, was very interested in developing cooperative agriculture in the country. He also wanted to introduce industries in the cities with the idea of creating a cooperative economy.

The second offer was from the Israel Bonds, the Development Corporation for Israel (DCI), the U.S. underwriter of debt securities issued by the State of Israel. We didn't come to an agreement for this but then I received a third offer from Keren Hayesod, United Israel Appeal, to be their delegate in Rio de Janeiro. Naturally, I had to discuss with my wife how she felt about interrupting her work at Tel Aviv University. She was an Assistant Professor there and in time, she could have completed her PhD and become a Professor. Carmela is a fantastic person, and she thought that it was important for our family to take up one of these offers. She said, "Okay, if you think that we should go around the world, I agree."

I made something very clear from the beginning that I would only go to São Paulo. I didn't want to go to Chile or anywhere other than Brazil. If I was going to leave Israel for a job abroad, I only wanted to go to São Paulo. I felt I owed it to my parents. My sister had gone to live in the USA, and my parents were alone in Brazil. This was 1969 when my mother was 69, and my father 74.

As it happens, I was fortunate that I didn't take the job in Chile as it would probably have ended badly, as soon after, there was a revolution and Allende was overthrown. Influential organizations, the CIA, and highly ranked army officers organized a coup. It was reported that he committed suicide, but later it was discovered that he had been forced into killing himself. After that, the regime changed completely, and Augusto Pinochet took over as President. The tragedies that he created are well documented.

Suddenly a miracle occurred. I was approached by an acquaintance of mine with a new serious job offer. Mordechai Hazor was once a member of our youth movement Dror in Brazil (his name was Marcus Chaitchik, but we called him *Katchke*, meaning “goose”), and now he was in charge of the International Department of the Histadrut. He said to me, “Look, I checked. We want somebody to go to São Paulo Brazil and create a movement called “Friends of the Histadrut.”

I need to explain that around that time there had been an incident when a ship with new immigrants arrived from Latin America, and a journalist interviewed them when they docked in Haifa. He asked them if they would become members of the Histadrut, but they replied that they didn't know anything about the organization. The next day the newspaper published a negative article, as the media often does, stating that, “The new immigrants don't even know what the Histadrut is.” At this time, 1969, the Histadrut's Chairman was Yitzhak ben Aharon, a fantastic personality, and the treasurer was Yehoshua Levy, a serious man, who was never involved in any scandal. (Many politicians today could follow his example). Some people opposed Yitzhak ben Aharon, but he was very well respected and the Histadrut was a powerful organization. Knowing that these two men were at the head of the Histadrut, I accepted the position.

I was contacted soon after and told that I had to stop in New York on the way to Brazil to learn how to raise money. Apart from creating the Friends of the Histadrut, my job also entailed creating a campaign. I didn't feel that even with all my responsibilities, I would be busy enough, as any activities for the Friends of the Histadrut would have to take place in the evenings after people finish work. The same applied to raising money, as it also had to occur when people had free time. To help me fill up my working day, I became a representative of the Histour Tourist Company. It belonged to the Histadrut and interested me as it was a serious activity.

In order for Carmela to finish her Master's degree at Bar Ilan, we decided that I would leave in December 1969 and that she would join me after she completed her studies in February 1970. During my absence, Carmela had some problems with our car but solved everything. And — life is not a picnic, as our friend Yehuda Ressler used to say — some of our ‘acquaintances’ seeing this incredibly attractive young woman alone tried to come nearer. My wife, however, always knew how to keep undesired admirers at a distance.

We rented out our house, which helped us a lot financially, and were lucky to find a lovely American family who were in Israel to represent Westinghouse. At the time, I thought Westinghouse just sold refrigerators and other home appliances. It was only much later I discovered that Westinghouse was also involved in armaments and weapons and that our tenant was working with our Defense Ministry. After I had been in Brazil for a year, he wrote me a letter saying, "These bloody Israelis are so smart. I came here for two or three years, but in one year they learned everything that I can teach them! So, I have to go back to America." We agreed for another family employed by Westinghouse to take over the tenancy.

Everything went well until our third tenant moved in and caused some very unpleasant problems. It was a diplomat from the British Embassy, but embassies don't sign rental contracts in full, they just agree to "take responsibility that on 'date so and so' our employee will leave the house." It didn't state anywhere how he would leave the property. This particular person left our house in a neglected state, allowing his pets to completely destroy some pieces of our furniture, which we had to throw out. He also left owing us some money, and in order to save his own cash, he had never watered our garden. Although some of the plants died, others were saved due to one of our neighbors, a wonderful lady called Judy Golan, who watered our garden without being asked. They had built a house on the other corner, but at that time, we didn't even know her. She is a super angel, and we are still friends.

When I left in December, Carmela and Iris went to live in a community center, originally for new olim, (immigrants) not far from our house. It wasn't easy, although she still had Aliza to help her, and being very capable, Carmela managed. Carmela always manages.

I flew straight to New York and spent a week learning how to raise money for the Histadrut, and then carried on to Brazil, where my parents were excited about my return. However, they weren't at the airport when I arrived, and after waiting a while, I telephoned home. The maid told me that they had left to come and pick me up, so I waited some more. Eventually, they arrived, but they didn't say anything, and we went straight home. My mother was too quiet for my liking, and when we were sitting having coffee, she suddenly got up and left the house

saying, “One moment.” My father had popped out to his office for a few minutes, but I couldn’t understand why my mother had left so suddenly. When my father returned and asked where my mother was, I told him that she had suddenly run out the door, so he also left the house. I ran after them, and I saw that my mother was heading in the direction of a first aid station, just a couple of blocks away. I ran to catch up with her and I asked what was wrong. She told me she had chest pains, so I ran ahead and caught the doctor just as he was about to leave. His replacement wouldn’t have arrived for another 20 minutes, so I pleaded with him not to leave as my mother was on her way. When she arrived, in the middle of a severe heart attack, he saved her life. His initial massage didn’t help, but he attached her to electrodes, and after three attempts, it took effect.

I still remember how shocked I felt. He called an ambulance with more equipment and a specialty crew. As it was Sunday, there was little traffic on the roads, and it arrived quickly and took my mother to the hospital. For many years I had this doctor’s name, but I regret that I don’t remember it anymore. Even without a name, I am thankful to him for saving my mother. My father and I went home, obviously still shocked and upset. They kept my mother in the hospital for over two weeks, and then she had to spend another three weeks in bed at home. She



Judi and Eli Golan

was 69 at the time and recuperated completely. Luckily, she lived for another seven years after that episode and passed away at the age of 76.

That evening my father told me that my mother woke up with pains, and before coming to the airport, they went to their family doctor, who checked her over and said, jokingly, that she was just afraid of getting old. Sometimes our body gives us surprises. We think that we have control but... maybe also it was because she was excited about my arrival.

I was now living in Brazil, and my name was João Drucker. For the first two months that I was there, I lived with my parents. This was very practical for me as I didn't have to pay rent, and there was a maid in the house (it was common in Brazil in those days in middle and upper-class homes), so it was easy for me to organize my life. My very good friend, Oswaldo Wolff, helped me a lot in the early days — he gave me some office space free of charge and helped me buy a car. Later on, when I saw that the tourism business was improving, I rented the room from him. I had gained a little experience in tourism when I was in Israel and understood what I had to do. I began by contacting all kinds of travel agencies. There were three Jewish agencies that organized trips to Israel, and I did my best to persuade them to organize tours through Histour, who would take care of all the details. During that time, I organized a trip for a group of journalists from the magazine *Claudia*, which was part of the big media company Abril. They went to Israel through Histour and enjoyed a very successful press trip. The result was some interesting and positive articles about Israeli life and its economy.

Always trying to expand my activities I succeeded in creating good relations with a director of Melia, a well-known international Spanish tourism company. We tried to reach an agreement of cooperation between Melia and Histour and I sent a proposal to Israel about this. The people I was in contact with in the Head Office were delighted with the idea and saw it as a big breakthrough. Unfortunately, the Director General of Histour in Israel at the time was more interested in traveling to Japan and Thailand for personal reasons. He didn't reply to the proposal and the opportunity to form a cooperation with Melia was lost. Today, Melia is one of the big tourism companies with offices and hotels around the world. Pity.

The second part of my work was to organize a group of Friends of the Histadrut and its campaign. I started speaking to some people about a campaign and was quite shocked when they looked at me and said, "You must be joking. Who has the money? Rich people. Rich people are not going to give money to the Histadrut — a workers-syndicate. If they make donations, they give money to Israel, through Keren Ha'Kayemet or Keren Hayesod."

The general opinion was that I might be able to raise a few dollars here and there, but nobody seemed to think that I could run a campaign to benefit the Histadrut. It wasn't the same in Brazil as it was in New York where many wealthy Jews lived, and quite a lot of them were probably members of the BUND in Poland or Russia before coming to America. The BUND is a left-wing organization which is still active and would naturally see the Histadrut as an ally. I realized that I was in a very different position than my colleagues in New York and that there wasn't much I could do.

Another problem was that in 1969 Brazil was under a very strict military dictatorship which had begun in 1964, exactly when I came on my family visit. I couldn't openly publicize my activities for the Histadrut. The idea of raising money was not realistic, which I reported back to Israel and was told to carry on working for the tourism industry.

I enjoyed working with the Friends of the Histadrut, which became quite successful. I organized a lovely group of young people who were interested in Israel and the organization. The person who helped me the most was Doctor David Ehrlich, an oncology specialist. He was very well-known and respected, and he chaired the group. With his help, we had weekly meetings at our house of between 20-30 people between the ages of 20 to 40. The organization grew, and we published some interesting articles explaining the meaning and value of the Histadrut for Israel. I wanted to avoid the embarrassing situation of new immigrants being ignorant about this important institution.

An amusing event happened during one of these meetings. My father had a good friend, Professor Flusser, who was a Professor of Philosophy and Literature. They loved to play chess together and met frequently. He was an excellent storyteller and had a fantastic memory.

I invited him to give a talk to our Friends of the Histadrut, and he agreed, saying he would speak about the 'Ludic Man,' homo ludico. Ludico means to play, and he gave a fascinating talk about different aspects of playing. It was extremely interesting but only lasted about an hour and a half, and at 9.30 he just said "Goodbye" to us and left. The meeting was at our house, and I had invited my parents to join us. They didn't usually attend our meetings, they were in their seventies, and the group was mainly made up of 30 years old, but as they knew the Professor, I thought they would enjoy it. Generally, after the talk, we would all sit around and chat for a couple of hours, but after a few minutes, one of the couples who always stayed late said, "João, sorry, it's late, we have to go." I said, "But you always stay on a bit longer", but he apologized again and left. Another couple soon said goodnight and thanked me for an excellent evening. After a few moments, I looked around and realized what was happening. My father was going from person to person and asking them not to keep Carmela and João up too late. He was worried that maybe we were tired and that our guests should go home and let us sleep. It was hilarious and I understood why he was doing it, but I asked him to stop and suggested that they go home. They did so, their house was only two minutes away, and we carried on for a bit longer.

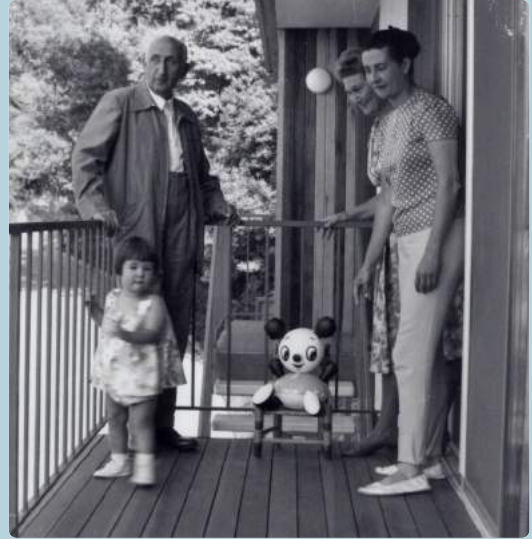
I enjoyed working for the Histadrut, but it wasn't without difficulties, and at one point, in 1970, I was almost forced to cancel a public meeting at very short notice. Our group decided to hold a special event to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Histadrut. We chose a date and a location and sent out invitations. We arrived early to prepare the venue and were shocked when we were told that it was impossible to go ahead with our meeting. We had arranged everything in good time, but somebody changed the permits and now the municipality and the police told us that it couldn't take place. We argued, tried to call a higher authority but nothing helped. I was upset as it would have been very bad publicity for us as we wouldn't have been able to let people know in time. I decided to contact the Honorary Consul of Israel, Mr. Leon Feffer, an important figure in our community, the owner of a huge paper factory and a multi-millionaire. I had already introduced myself to him, and he was aware of my involvement with the Histadrut. I don't know where he stood politically, but I don't think he was particularly interested in supporting the organization. In fact, I believe he was suspicious of any workers' syndicate. Therefore, I was surprised when he said to me that evening, "João, I am in the middle of my dinner,

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but I'm going to come to you.” It was very kind of him, and sure enough he arrived after about 15 minutes, and looked at the documents I had received. He called one of his many influential contacts, who then spoke to the manager of the hall, and the police, and miraculously all the problems disappeared.



Carmela and Mimi Moses



My parents visiting Marietta and Caren



Dafna and Carmela at the Kineret



Dafna Salant Saperia

We carried on with our event and Mr. Feffer went home to finish his dinner. I appreciated what Leon did for us as otherwise, it would have been an embarrassing and damaging situation for the Histadrut and me. His attitude won my total respect, as even though not a supporter of the Histadrut it was important for him that any event linked to Israel should not be disturbed. In Hebrew we say Kol HaKavod, meaning “All the respect.”

My activity continued for a while, but I gradually understood that it had no future and would not develop beyond the group of 20 or 30 people who met once a week. I also realized at this time that the Director of Histour had very little interest in South America. I did my best, but I didn't receive much positive feedback from Israel. When I was near the end of my two-year contract, I advised the Histadrut that I didn't see a reason to continue, and I would return to Israel. At the same time, Mr. Shalom Dror, the Regional Director for Keren Hayesod, contacted me and asked me if I would like to work for the Keren Hayesod in Brazil, located in São Paulo. There was a Director for Keren Hayesod for the whole of Brazil, Motke Golan, who became a good friend, and another director in Rio, but they wanted me to take care of the city of São Paulo. At first, I said “I'm not interested. I want to go back home.” Then I was approached by the delegate from Bonds for Israel, offering to be their delegate as well. Again, I told them, “I'm not interested.”

I received an invitation from our Ambassador in Brazil, Yitzhak Harkavi. At that time, Brazil's capital was Rio de Janeiro, so I went to meet him, and we had a very long and agreeable talk. He told me, “João, you know Portuguese, you know the people and you are very well accepted. You have a charismatic way of speaking, and you know what to do. You have been here for two years, and originally you thought of staying four years. So, why don't you accept the position with the Keren Hayesod?” After that meeting I agreed to be a delegate for Keren Hayesod and that we would stay for another two years.



Whatever you are,
be a good one.

Abraham Lincoln

Back in Brazil

I was in Brazil by myself for about two months before Carmela and Iris arrived. I was living comfortably in my old room with my parents in the same house they had been in since we arrived in 1940. My mother was still slowly recovering from her heart attack, and my father was 75 and retired. It was a very comfortable house, although unfortunately, in the last years of my father's life, he had difficulties going up and down the stairs. I only came to learn this after he passed away. There were no electric stair chairs at that time, and I regret till today that he suffered without us knowing. They lived in the same house all their lives until 1978 when my father passed away.

After some time, I bought a small secondhand Volkswagen, called a Fusca in Brazil, and a Beetle in Israel. My friend Oswaldo gave a guarantee to the company that I will pay what I owe. I remember I was there one day, and the guy working for the company asked me a lot of questions when suddenly his boss called out and said, "Why are you asking him all those questions? We have Mr. Oswaldo's guarantee — it's all fine." My position was irrelevant as he knew that Oswaldo would pay if a problem arose.

Before Carmela and Iris were due to arrive, I had to find somewhere for us all to live and rented an apartment in an area called Paraiso. Paraiso means heaven, but it was not a heavenly apartment at all, and the moment Carmela arrived, she told me that she didn't like it. Luckily, I had arranged that we could easily cancel the contract if we decided to leave. We then had a great stroke of

luck, which made our time in Brazil extremely pleasant. My mother succeeded in finding a house on the same street as theirs — just six houses between them. The house wasn't exactly the same, but very similar and slightly bigger because the owner had made some changes to enable him to charge a higher rent. We knew the family who owned it, so the terms were good, and we moved into a lovely house with a small garden near my parents, which was fantastic. In Brazil, it was automatic that a family had a maid at home, and as soon as we moved in, we employed someone to help us in the house. There was a very nice room at the end of our garden, and we were extremely lucky with our maid. We called her Mina, although her real name was Maria Jesuina de Jesus, which is twice the name of Jesus and once the name of Holy Mary. She was a Catholic but not religious, believed in God, but had a deep dislike for priests, as she felt they were only interested in money. At that time, Brazil was known legally as a Catholic country, although that isn't the case today. Luckily, due to a great statesman, Rui Barbosa, religion and state were separate in Brazil, the same as it is in the USA due to Jefferson. How sad that we missed out on that in Israel.

Another Brazilian politician became very instrumental in the creation of the State of Israel. On November 29th, 1947, Oswaldo Aranha was President of the United Nations General Assembly. During the vote for Israel's creation, he postponed the vote once or twice, allowing the USA and us to convince smaller countries to vote in our favor. These votes were fundamental for the positive decision. Israel is always thankful for this Brazilian.

Carmela and I always spoke Hebrew to each other, but Mina now started speaking Portuguese to Iris, so our daughter learned Hebrew from us and Portuguese from the maid, which was a big help later when she started going to Kindergarten. Today, Iris is fluent in English, has a good knowledge of Spanish as we spent three years in Argentina, and understands Portuguese.

About two months after Carmela and Iris arrived, we had a long weekend break and took the opportunity to rest and catch up with what was going on in our lives. Carmela told me that she was taking Portuguese lessons, (also as I mentioned earlier — taxi drivers helped a lot), she was going to yoga lessons and improving her French. She told me, "I am taking a cookery course and also trying to get a job at the university." I remember I looked at Carmela and asked

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*Carmela and me
at a Keren Hayesod
reception*



Rudi Drucker



Mina

her, “When do you have time to breathe?” My wife has always been incredibly active and knowledgeable, but I wasn’t aware of all the activities with which she was involved. Carmela had also made new friends. She was especially close to Rosa as their friendship had begun some years earlier in Israel, and as Mina was able to look after Iris, Carmela was able to go out and meet people.

Naturally, I was delighted that Carmela had adapted so quickly and successfully to our new surroundings – something that she managed to do wherever we were. She has always been and continues to be admired and respected by everyone she meets. A few months later, Carmela was accepted into the University of São Paulo, the best university in South America, to work as an assistant in the Chemistry Department. São Paulo University – USP – is known as one of the most important and serious universities in the world. The Head of the Chemistry Department was Professor Vicente Toscano. An American Professor called Richard Weiss was there as a visiting scientist. Richard told Carmela that she was wasting her time and recommended that she study for her Ph.D. When he saw Carmela’s hesitation, he suggested that she join forces with him and that with his assistance, they could work with Vicente Toscano to receive official approval. That’s exactly what happened – Carmela began to prepare herself for her doctorate.

She wrote it all in English and then had to translate it into Portuguese as the University wouldn’t accept a Ph.D. thesis in English. This was a complicated task, but luckily, Carmela had very good friends, three fantastic young women, colleagues in the department, who helped her translate and type up all her work. Without their assistance, I don’t know if Carmela would have been able to prepare the thesis. This was before we had computers, and if there was an error on the page, it all had to be re-typed. Her Ph.D. was full of adventures – but that will come later.

The Friends of the Histadrut group that I organized was going well and consisted of active young people, mostly intellectuals, who attended meetings every two weeks. Some of that group eventually made Aliyah, and those who did undoubtedly would have been able to answer any questions about the Histadrut.

Although we were both very busy when we lived in Brazil, we tried to make time to travel. One day Carmela came home and told me that one of the

university groups was organizing a bus trip to Salvador, a city in the State of Bahia. It's a modern city, by the sea, and is interesting, beautiful, and alive with a higher than average Black population that had a considerable cultural influence on everything. This was 1970, and people worked hard in many professions, but part of the town was on the poor side of society.

Bahia is a wonderful State with some of the most beautiful beaches in the world. We returned there many times, and our son, much later, went there for his honeymoon and stayed at the Praia de São Paulo, one of the nicest in Bahia.

Carmela had registered us for this trip, and we were told they would have to let us know if there would be room for us. A nice young couple from the University came to see us and spent about an hour asking questions. We told them that I was originally Brazilian, that I spoke Portuguese, and that my wife was fairly proficient in the language. We talked about how much we enjoyed Brazilian music and the country's culture. We put on some Brazilian records and provided them with good coffee. When they left, they said they believed there would be a place for us on the trip and promised to phone soon. I said to Carmela, "We passed the exam", as I believed that they came to see what we were like and to make sure that we would easily integrate into the group. Carmela was very surprised as she thought it was only a courtesy visit. I found it amusing that they wanted to check us out and see if we were suitable. The next day they called and told us that we were welcome to join them.

It was a fantastic excursion — two days on a bus, which isn't something I would do today, but then it was no problem at all. The distance from São Paulo to Salvador is about 1500 kilometers. We traveled the whole day, and at 8 or 9 in the evening, we got off, had a light dinner, and spent the night in a modest hotel. On the third day, at about 2 o'clock, we arrived in Salvador, where a program of events was set up for us. We had a wonderful time there and brought some nice things back; some of them are still in our house today. We have paintings by a very well-known artist, called Kennedy, and some pieces of tapestry, unique hats, and a Brazilian musical instrument called a Berimbau. We visited Mercado Modelo, Elevador Lacerda, Pelourinho and enjoyed seeing the whole city dancing. On two afternoons and evenings, the entire city, mainly the colored part of it, dance in groups in the various squares and streets in the most

natural way, enjoying themselves. It is a fantastic event. We enjoyed ourselves, but we were happy to return home and made the two-day bus journey back.

We used our holiday time to make other excursions and enjoyed some lovely trips. On one occasion, we drove down to Porto Alegre in the South. Mina stayed in São Paulo, so it was just Carmela, me, and Iris, who was about three and a half at the time. Whenever we stopped anywhere, she would say, “So, is this our house tonight?” We arrived at a fantastic beach in the South, called Camboriu, with some beautiful bungalows right next to it. Before we had a chance to say anything, this little person called Iris said, “This is our house tonight” (*Vamos fazer aqui nossa casa*). It had been a question for the first few days, but on this occasion, it was a statement. We stayed there for two nights and loved being by the beach. The hotel owners brought whatever we ordered for breakfast and served it to us on our terrace. It was a high-class place and, at that time, reasonably priced. It’s totally unrecognizable today as there are big hotels there full of tourists and it has become very expensive.

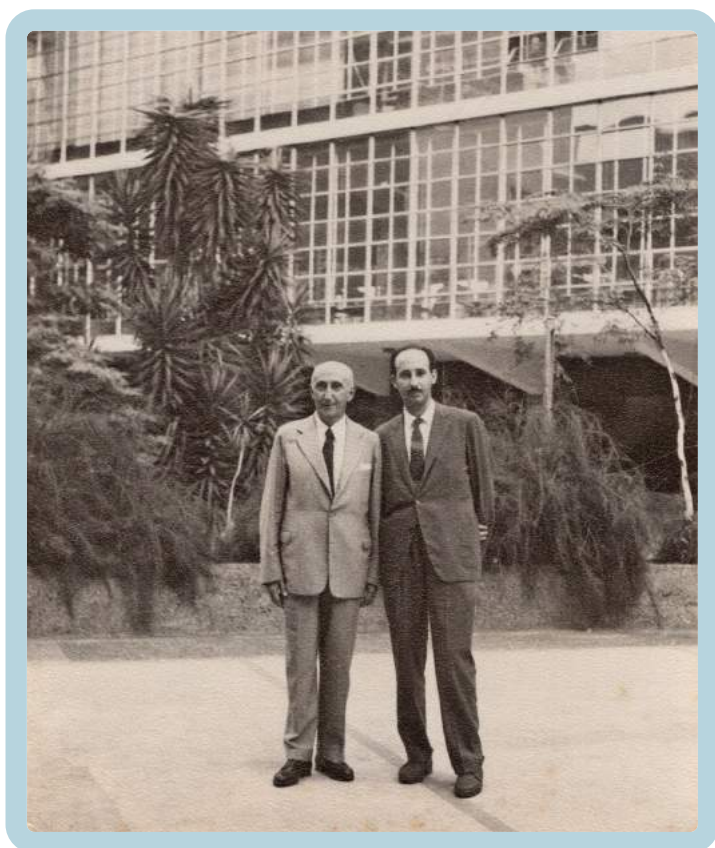
After Camboriu, we went to Gramado e Canela, a mountain resort town known for its flowers and good climate in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, near to Porto Alegre, the largest city in South Brazil. We were there at the end of the year, which is summertime, and it was very enjoyable being in a cool atmosphere for a few days. The area is also well known for its fantastic and colorful hydrangeas.

Rio de Janeiro hosts the famous Carnaval every year, and one year I managed to buy good tickets through the Embassy for Carmela and myself. As Rio is so beautiful, we decided to take Iris and Mina with us to enjoy this marvel. We went by car — a seven-hour drive on a good highway. Today, due to the higher volume of traffic, it isn’t so good. We rented a lovely apartment from a friend on Copacabana beach and spent five fantastic days there. The Carnaval lasts for three days and is full of people having fun, mixing with others, and enjoying parties. A lot of drinking is also involved. Carmela and I had an unbelievable night and, at the end, enjoyed a special breakfast at one of the lovely beach hotels. Something never to forget.

São Paulo also holds a Carnaval with a parade but considerably smaller than the one in Rio. Groups who attend the Carnaval, known as *Escolas de Samba*,

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(Samba schools) with big groups, 500-1000 participants, competing for first place, spend the whole year preparing themselves. Each group has its place, where they meet to dance, sing, and prepare the show during the year. It was like a club, and we used to go to one of them sometimes on a Friday or Saturday night, especially if we had any visitors from Israel. The clubs were for members only but as a diplomat I had a special license allowing me to enter. Whoever we took there was hypnotized by it all. I remember one of our guests, a medical professor we knew well, was stiff and uncomfortable, and initially, when we arrived, said that he would prefer to go back to the hotel. However, once he was there enjoying a Caipirinha cocktail, he began to feel better. I asked a very nice Black girl (the majority were Black) to do me a favor, and when the music begins, to go and take him to dance. "Don't ask him," I said, "just take him." Brazilians are friendly people, and although I had never seen this young woman before, she agreed as she wanted everybody to be happy. When the



With my father in front of Senai

music began, she went over to him, saying, “Come, dance, come,” and although her English wasn’t very good, he understood and started to dance with her. On our way home, he said that it was the best evening of his life.

By the middle of 1971, Keren Hayesod had convinced me to accept their offer to work for them in São Paulo as Campaign Director. I had a terrific colleague called Motke Golan, who was Director for all Brazil, but he did not interfere with my work at all. He was in contact with big donors and dealt with outside problems. We created an excellent and friendly relationship and worked well together, and he became more than just a colleague, but a good friend. People in Brazil believed that he was a Sabra (Israeli born), but in fact, he was a Brazilian. He felt that he needed to present himself as an Israeli wherever he went for the sake of good public relations. I didn’t do that. Everybody knew I grew up in Brazil — there was no need to keep it a secret.

I now entered a new phase in my career. I gave up the office I had been using for Friends of the Histadrut and began working for the Keren Hayesod in São Paulo, called Fundo Comunitário. There hadn’t been an Israeli director there for a long time before me. A local person was in charge of the office — a pleasant young man, but he didn’t deal with the donors or the community. Although my job was mainly connected to the community and the donors, I also needed to organize the office. One of the biggest problems was receiving the pledges made by donors at the beginning of the year. Often people promised to donate to the foundation in several payments, but the office was run so inefficiently that parts of the payments got lost.

There were many matters that I needed to attend to, but I was happy to be working with a community and meeting many new people.

The job was demanding but also satisfying, Carmela was enjoying her studies, and Iris was growing up. Also, being near my parents was a huge bonus, and I felt that I owed it to them. Even with many problems — life was not bad.



Every success story is a tale of constant adaption, revision and change.

Sir Richard Branson

Some Problems

In September 1972, the atrocity that took place at the Munich Olympic Games had a significant impact on our, up until then, peaceful lives. That evening, we were at the Teatro Municipal in São Paulo, enjoying an outstanding performance by the visiting Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. Some news came through during the concert about a group of terrorists, but it wasn't clear, and it seemed that the German officials had reached an agreement with them. We went home thinking that the situation had been solved, but the next morning we received the news about the tragedy that had taken place.

After the 11 Israeli athletes were murdered, the Mossad sent people worldwide to avenge the incident. Our secret service received information that the new terror plan was to kidnap children of Israeli diplomats abroad. Those of us in South America and some places in Europe suddenly received an explicit instruction directly from Prime Minister Golda Meir to be armed at all times and never to leave our children alone. From that moment on, I walked around with a gun under my shirt and bought a small revolver for Carmela to have in her purse. Both of us had some army experience, but we went to train and practice firing a gun. Luckily, neither of us had to use them, but Carmela had a very unpleasant experience which brought her into contact with the police.

She came out of the University one day after lectures and was walking towards her car. As mentioned previously, I initially bought myself a Fusca, but later on, I bought a second-hand car for Carmela from an Israeli Diplomat who worked

in Rio de Janeiro but had returned to Israel. We were living in São Paulo, but the car was still registered in Rio de Janeiro. I have to explain that Brazil's atmosphere was complicated as the country was under a military dictatorship. It was not as horrible as Pinochet's regime in Chile, but it was not agreeable. There was a center called D.O.P.S. the political police, and certainly not a place anybody wanted to visit. You couldn't be sure that you would come out if you went in, and we heard terrible accounts about torture and worse.

Some powerful groups in the University were anti-government and anti-dictatorship. There were also extreme left-wing groups all around Brazil who behaved violently. This particular day as Carmela was making her way towards her car, she saw two men walking around it. They didn't try and open the door but were just looking at it. She thought that maybe she should leave the car there for me to pick up later, but they had seen her and realized she was the owner. As she reached the car, they began to ask her questions, with one acting as 'the good cop' and the other as 'the bad cop'. They asked her if this was her car, and she told them yes, but that she hadn't had it registered yet. They wanted to know why, so Carmela explained that her husband bought it from a friend who had left the country. They asked more questions about why it wasn't marked as a diplomat's car, and Carmela explained why (it was his wife's car), but they remained suspicious and asked more questions. Carmela was trying to behave naturally and stay calm, knowing all the time that she was carrying an illegal gun in her bag. If they had found it, she would have been sent to jail immediately. That would have been terrible, of course, for us all. It would also have been hard to explain that Golda Meir, the Israeli Prime Minister, had told us all to carry a gun to prevent our daughter from being kidnapped.

Carmela was trembling inside, and there was nobody around. The bad cop suddenly said, "You know what, lady? I think we should go to the D.O.P.S. office to get some clearer answers." Poor Carmela was scared by now, but somehow, she succeeded in convincing them that nothing was wrong. They looked at some of her chemistry papers in her hand and saw notes about chemical structures and ingredients used in research work. She showed them photos of Iris and explained that her daughter was waiting for her to pick her up from nursery. In the end, the two agents were convinced and let her go. She got into her car, trembling, and rather than come home, which was quite far, she drove to Rosa's

house, which was nearby, and stayed there until she had completely calmed down. Today, 50 years later, these events do look slightly different, but it was undoubtedly a dangerous period.

I was running the Keren Hayesod office with a team of 25 to 30 employees working either in the office or in the field. Those in the field had to collect money that had been pledged and try to get new donations. We had professionals and volunteers working with us, but the volunteers became more important as they had a more significant influence over the people we approached to ask for donations. I was in charge of São Paulo, our main branch, but Keren Hayesod was also active in Rio, Porto Alegre, Curitiba, and other Jewish areas. I was a Brazilian working for an Israeli institution, as Keren Hayesod (Fundo Comunitário) was not registered yet. Nowadays, it is a regular fundraising organization and is registered in Brazil.

On one occasion, I approached one of my good friends, who contributed to the campaign, but in my opinion, with too modest an amount. I spoke to him, and he increased his donation by ten, which delighted me. Unfortunately, one of the semi-volunteers (he secretly received a salary from Head Office) was offended by my intervention as he used to go to this friend of mine and was satisfied with the small contribution. It looked to him that this strange Israeli had interfered in his work, and he became my mortal enemy. He went to the Chairman of the campaign and asked that I be removed and sent back to Israel immediately, saying that I was ruining everything. I had a meeting with the Chairman, and we clarified the problem, although he remained unfriendly towards me. I believed he was worried I could pressure him into increasing his contribution. The Regional Director also heard about it, but he didn't have any input. However, when the International Treasurer came to Brazil, he was influenced by someone opposed to me, which caused him to say at the end of his trip, "João, I think you should cut short your stay here and go home a year earlier. People are not so happy with you here." I remember feeling extremely disappointed, but in fact, it was not his area and wasn't any of his concern.

As part of our work, we held a big reception once a year, attended by all the local influential and wealthy people. I was in charge of organizing and inviting the guests, and we usually also had a special guest speaker from Israel. He or



Arik Sharon during his visit to Brazil - 1972



Keren Hayesod event in São Paulo, 1971 Left to Right: Henrique Rosset, Director of Keren Hayesod Shai Kreutner, Israeli Ambassador Itzhak Harkavi, Honorary Consul Leon Feffer, myself presenting the speakers, and Head of the Jewish Agency Ariei Dulzin



Activists Seminar, 1971

she, spoke in general terms of what was happening in Israel and how much their help was needed. The Chairman of the campaign made the direct appeal, and we went around the tables to try and secure financial commitments. Some of them wrote out a check on the spot, although that was rare, and mostly they wanted to pay in installments. My work was to ensure that all the pledges were realized. I was very successful in carrying that out and completely changed how the system worked. During my time there, donations increased by three or more times, part of the reason that later, the Director-General of Keren Hayesod (Shay Kreutner) wanted me to stay on for another two years. My position was a serious and important role, but I also had to take into account the other elements around me — meaning the people I had to deal with. The aim was clear — to achieve the best financial result with the help of others, and as in all situations, there were high points and positive input, but sometimes unpleasantness, as in this case.

A special highlight was General Arik Sharon's visit to be our guest speaker and to stay for a week. It was 1972, and he was already well-known and respected for his activities. Since the Six-Day War in 1967, the Gaza Strip had been a huge headache, and Arik Sharon's job was to keep order there. Following that period, Keren Hayesod invited him to go to Canada and then carry on to Brazil.

I was at the airport waiting for Arik Sharon to arrive — but nobody came. We couldn't understand what had gone wrong, and there was no way to find out. We contacted our Ambassador, Itzhak Harkavi, at the Embassy in Rio de Janeiro and asked him to come to São Paulo urgently to step in for our guest speaker who hadn't arrived. Harkavi agreed to do so and saved the evening. The next afternoon we received a message that Arik Sharon was due to arrive that afternoon, so a day and a half-day later, we went back to the airport to meet him. He explained that the Canadians were 'complicated' and detained him for an extra couple of days.

Later on, we discovered that the Canadians did not detain him at all, and he and his wife, Lily, left a couple of days early and had taken a trip to one of the Caribbean Islands. We were happy that they had a nice time but thought they could have at least advised us of the delay. Computers didn't exist in those days, and other ways of communication took time.

SOME PROBLEMS

We had an excellent time with him, spending five evenings in different homes with about 30 attendees each time. After he gave his talk, we had an appeal for our organization. Everything went very well, and the visit was a great success enjoyed by all. One evening, Carmela and I took Arik back to his hotel together with Golan and his wife. There was a security guard outside their suite, who checked it before he was let in, but Lily didn't allow anyone in until she had been in and checked it out again herself. It was surprising and nice to see how she took care of her husband.

He asked us if we were in a hurry, and when we told him that we weren't, he ordered two bottles of whiskey and told us he would tell us some stories. Arik finished 1½ bottles by himself (we four drank the rest), but it had no ill effect on him at all. He remained completely clear-headed and explained how he had created some order in Gaza. It was a fascinating story as every time they made a small decision, the whole situation changed. Eventually, he made a big decision and opened two main avenues to cut the city into four sections. Before, it was a mass of small streets and houses, but he opened it all up. He told his soldiers to always carry a ladder with them, and before they went into any house, to go up the ladder and look inside to see what was happening. Most houses had an outside area, and this was in case there was someone inside with ammunition waiting for Israeli soldiers. This procedure saved a lot of lives. He also instructed his soldiers to take a tape measure with them and measure the house from inside and out. Any difference could mean a concealed room where arms and people were hidden. When they looked for specific terrorists, he instructed them to make a list of women living alone, as they would be more vulnerable. A terrorist could go to a lone woman and terrorize her into providing him with a place to shelter, food, someone to do his laundry, and possibly even sex if he wanted. They made a list of all the houses where women lived alone, and after two weeks, they arrested 22 of the 30 terrorists they had been hunting.

That evening, we were in his hotel suite from about 10.00 in the evening. until 1.00 a.m. the following morning. Arik told us stories the whole time, and it was one of the most interesting evenings I have ever had in my life.

One of the important events in our work was an annual evening to honor our volunteers. I was in charge of organizing this event (Yom ha'askan), and I also

had to give a speech. The Director-General, Mr. Kreutner, attended, and it was all extremely successful. I confess that speaking in public was a little new to me at that time, but I did it. As the diplomat Abba Eban once said, “Before you go up, you are always nervous, and you are always a little unsure”, and he was an excellent speaker. I wasn’t up to his level, but I made quite a good speech. At the end of the evening, the Chairman of the campaign, Henrique Roset, stood up and thanked everybody involved, including the cleaner, but failed to mention me. He knew that Kreutner wanted me to stay for another two years, and he wasn’t happy about that. While he was talking, I told my friend and colleague Golan, “You know what, Motke, I will make my stay shorter. It’s October now — I’ll leave in January.” Golan was horrified as he didn’t want me to go. I didn’t want to stay at the ceremony anymore and started to make my way home. A few minutes later, Golan came running behind me, urging me to go back to hear what was being said. When I got back to the hall, the General Honorary Consul, Leon Feffer, who had helped me out in the past, said that Roset had forgotten one very important person. He began to describe me, and I was both moved and surprised because of his kind and generous words. After he spoke so warmly about João Drucker, I said to Golan, “Okay, you win. I will stay till next July.”

The next day I was invited to have lunch with our Director-General, Mr. Kreutner. He asked me to recommend a restaurant, and I was careful not to choose anything too expensive. During our lunch, he said, “All this about you going home is nonsense. I want you to stay here, not only to the end of your job, which is in the middle of 1973, but two more years.” He also told me that whatever had happened in the past was nonsense and that he hadn’t been consulted.” I knew that I didn’t want to stay on but also didn’t want to refuse the General-Director to his face. I promised to think it over, speak with my family, and advise my colleagues within the next few days. I waited until he arrived back in Israel and wrote him a very nice letter and explained that I didn’t want to be away from Israel for more than four years. We would get used to a different kind of life, and I only wanted to live in Israel — I never sought to live in another country. Even now, almost 50 years later, in spite of the many problems, wars and disagreeable corruptions, I refuse to believe that I could live anywhere else. Kreutner accepted my decision, and I was very flattered and quite proud of the fact that he had asked me to stay on for another two years.

SOME PROBLEMS

In life, the way you look at yourself can change in a matter of a few minutes. Leon Feffer's words had a big influence on me, and together with Kreutner's request, I decided to stay in Brazil a bit longer. Once again, I was reminded of a friend's humorous saying, "Life is not a picnic."

I had some issues with my back when I worked for Keren Hayesod, which began much earlier when I was a reservist in the army. As I mentioned earlier, I was in the anti-aircraft group, and once or twice a year, we were called to carry out some exercises. During one maneuver, we wanted to finish early and go home. We organized a line to pass the ammunition from one to another and load up the truck. They were heavy, and suddenly I felt my back give a "click," and I couldn't get up. I was helped home and went to my doctor the next day, who gave me an injection and told me to lay down for several days. (When I returned from Brazil a few years later, the Army transferred me to Intelligence).

At that time, there was a baker living in Hadera who was known as a 'miracle maker'. He went from making bagels to becoming an outstanding masseur as he had wonderful hands. Nobody knew his real name — he was just known as the Bagel Macher (bagel maker). Many truck drivers suffered from back problems at that time, as their vehicles were not as comfortable as they are today, and they used to go to the Bagel Macher to receive a special massage. He also used a treatment called *cosot ruach*, *bankes* which was a 'cupping therapy' put on your back to help the blood circulate quicker. I went to him two or three times, and although the massages were excellent, the treatment didn't help at all. There is an excellent expression in Yiddish, '*toite bankes*', which means that if you give these glasses to someone who is dead — they certainly won't help.

The first time it happened in Brazil, I was working for the Histadrut and went to see an orthopedic doctor who tried to help. Although he couldn't solve the problem, after one week, the pain had gone away. Later on, when I was with the Keren Hayesod, I had much better medical insurance. One day when I was sitting in a swivel chair, I made a wrong movement — and once again, I was bent over double and in terrible pain. Someone recommended an orthopedic doctor, who did some manipulations and gave me an injection, but it only gave me temporary relief. I was being treated by two orthopedic doctors for a while, but I was still in pain and could not walk in an upright position. The treatment was



Keren Hayesod staff, Director Kreutner with delegates from Latin America, including Motke Golan and myself



*Left to Right:
My colleague, Motke Golan, (speaking), H. Rosset, Arik Sharon, Leon Feffer, Consul Sima and myself.*



Iris in Brazil

very expensive, and as it was going on for a while, I was getting a bit worried. One day I was visiting my parents, and a friend of my father was there. Ernie Hecht was a multi-multi-millionaire, and he and his wife were a lovely couple. When he saw me, Ernie asked, "Why are you walking like that?" I told him, and he gave me the name of a Japanese masseur in São Paulo, who he said would help me. He also said to me, "João, you know, I could afford to go anywhere in the world to take care of my back, but I didn't. I just went to this man called Suma Shima. Go – it will help, but don't look around as it isn't too clean. Just do as he says. "I met Suma Shima, who was probably in his mid to late fifties. Using his thumb, he checked my spine, found the place, and suddenly pressed the spot – I jumped! In his awful Portuguese, he explained that he would bang that spot with his elbow. I became a bit frightened, but he told me that he had never broken anybody. I said to myself that I could always be the first ...

I remembered what Ernie Hecht had told me and let him carry on. He was strong, and the bang on my back hurt. First, he gave me two small injections, another few thumps with his elbow, and eventually, I heard a "click." After that, he told me to go home and to keep warm for a couple of days. I believe that every 'thump' he gave me had the strength of more than 50 kilos.

I was a bit confused by it all and didn't believe that he had cured me. I asked him, "How much do I owe you?" He replied, "Oh, 10 dollars." Doctors usually charge \$150 for a visit, but he was only asking for ten. I went back to him once more with Carmela to check and to be sure that it was not some sort of hypnosis. After another two days the pain disappeared. That was in 1972, about 50 years ago, and it never came back. I suffered from serious back pain every few months over a period of five years and was treated by excellent orthopedists but with no result. Mr. Shima, with one good bang of his elbow had cured me. I will always remember Suma Shima, and from that day, I understood that alternative medicine has great value.

When it was time for us to leave, Keren Hayesod São Paulo made us a very nice farewell party. We had made some very good friends during our time there; Oswaldo and Erica Wolff; Fiszal and Rosa Czeresnia; Tasia and Moizes Herstig; David Ehrlich and Laura; Boris and Elena Saginur; Motke, my special colleague in Keren Hayesod, and Edna Golan; Richard (Dick) Weiss and Jean,

and Carmela's special friends who helped her with her PhD: Roseli, Sueli and Rose Angela. Dick and Jean, by the way, were not Brazilian. He was the American professor who worked with Carmela on her Ph.D., and we met him again in Washington.

The hardest part was saying goodbye to my parents. They wanted to travel with us, but because of my mother's heart problem, the doctor advised against her being on a ship for 12 days. However, she was allowed to fly, and we arranged to meet in Zürich.

I had asked Keren Hayesod Jerusalem if we could travel back by ship. As it happens, in 1973, it was cheaper to go by sea than it was by air, so they readily agreed. We booked a cabin on the Provence, going to France and left Brazil in June 1973. We sailed from Brazil to Nice and enjoyed 12 fantastic days at sea. Everything was good, we had a comfortable cabin, and there was a nice atmosphere on board. Iris was four years old, and two incidents remain in my mind involving our little girl.

After breakfast, Iris could go to a children's club where they were entertained for the whole morning, giving us time to relax on deck, go swimming, or do whatever we wanted. Iris was being taken care of and having a good time. We picked her up in time to go to lunch followed by a rest in our cabin. One day when we came to fetch Iris, we could see her playing very nicely behind a large pane of glass, but there was nobody else there — she was all alone. Iris was playing in a big room all by herself, and it turned out that she was in an area where the woman in charge couldn't see her. She thought the children had all gone, so she closed up and went away. Luckily, Iris was playing happily, and she didn't pay any attention to her situation.

When she saw us, she came running to be with us, but of course, she couldn't get out, and we couldn't get in. It only took about ten minutes for someone to come and open up the room, but it seemed to us as if it was at least an hour. Once Iris was out, everything was all right, but I was very, very angry because it was dangerous to leave a four-year-old alone like that. I wanted to speak to the Captain but was told that I couldn't. I didn't accept this and started making my way through the first class section asking to see the Captain. Luckily, I speak French, and eventually, somebody told me that he was having lunch in the

first-class dining room. I went straight in there and saw where he was sitting with some guests. I went directly up to him and said, “Captain, I need you for one minute.” He was quite surprised, but as I was a guest, he got up and came to hear what I had to tell him. He was very shocked, asked my name and told me that it will never happen again. “Ca n’arrivera plus.” From then on, there was never just one woman with the children, and nothing like that happened again.

During the afternoons, they provided entertainment for us all in the big theater and invited people from the audience to participate. One man stood up and told some jokes, and then a young woman sang something. It was just about to finish when the presenter asked if anybody else wanted to come up and perform. Before we knew what was happening, our little four and a half-year-old went up to the front, took the microphone and said, “I will sing,” and sang a nice, short Brazilian song:

Atirei um pau no gatoto, mas o gatoto nao morreureureu. Dona Chicaca admirou-sese do berroo do berroo que o gato deu: MIAU!

She was fantastic, and Carmela and I were in awe! She hadn’t said anything to us but just went up onto the stage, took the microphone and performed in front of about 70 strangers, gave back the microphone and returned to her seat. Carmela and I were amazed.

We had overcome several challenges and enjoyed many good times in Brazil with my family and our new and wonderful friends, but it was time to move on — we were ready for our next adventure. We were young, optimistic, and believed that all would be good. Neither of us had jobs and no work waiting for us — we were just going to see what life would bring.



Try not to become a man of success,
but rather try to become a man of value.

Albert Einstein

Good to be Home

After 12 days at sea, we disembarked in Nice and picked up a rental car to drive to Monaco. We planned to drive to Avignon and then on to Paris to return the rented car. I had arranged before we left Brazil with Volkswagen to buy a car in Paris to bring back to Israel with us. It was a red Variant — an outlandish color, but I liked it. It was a van with plenty of space in the back. From Paris, we drove to Zürich to meet my parents. We traveled with them slowly from Zürich to Salzburg and around the Salzkammergut. We had a wonderful time together — I remember well an outstanding schnitzel we ate overlooking a marvelous valley — one of the best ever. After we left them, they enjoyed another two weeks' vacation in a special resort in Austria. My parents never wanted to be in Germany, but they were happy to be in Austria. They also never went back to Poland. At the end of the war, my father was invited by the Communist Regime to return and manage his factory. He refused, saying that he could not manage his factory for other people and be under the control of a 'commissar.'

After we left my parents, we carried on to Munich to buy some electrical appliances to take with us to Israel, as at that time it was known to be the best place to buy the goods, we needed for the house we had left four years earlier. Our economy was a little better than it had been, and we could now afford to buy some items which we hadn't been able to before. We arrived back in Zurich and met Gabriel (Carmela's father), who joined us for the rest of our tour. He was a fantastic travel companion and made us laugh a lot.

From Zurich, we drove to Italy. We went to the Dolomites, where Iris and I tried to ice skate. I had learned in Poland as a boy, and although I wasn't very good, I was able to keep my balance. Iris joined me now and then, and we often landed up on the floor together.

Our journey then took us to Trieste and Yugoslavia, which today is divided into six different republics. We went on a delightful excursion to an area called Plitvice, where there was a large cave with stalactites, stalagmites and fantastic lakes. Several hours later, after we left Plitvice, Gabriel asked if we could turn the car around and go back, as he had forgotten his pajamas. I thought it was strange as I always checked our hotel rooms before leaving, but apparently, they were under his pillow. We laughed and promised to buy him some new ones in Bulgaria.

We were heading in the direction of Bulgaria when the car broke down. Lucky Carmela and Gabriel could speak Bulgarian and a little Russian, as where we were in the middle of nowhere, nobody spoke any English, German, Portuguese, or Hebrew. Eventually, we found a repair shop for motorcycles, but they were able to fix our car. Our next plan was to cross the border to Bulgaria, where we encountered some other problems.

It was 1973, and Bulgaria was under the Communist regime. At the border control, we were asked several questions, and I replied in English. They knew that we were Israeli, and because we were going to stay with Carmela's uncle and not in a hotel, they told us that we had to pay a fee. I began to get angry, so Carmela pushed me away and started talking to the guard in Bulgarian. I didn't understand anything, but later on, Carmela told me that he said, "You say to your husband to behave. If he doesn't, we won't let him into Bulgaria." She only told me that a couple of days later to avoid any problems.

We got over that and went to Sofia to visit Carmela's aunt and uncle. We had visited here soon after we got married and now seven years later, the city had become modernized with more cars on the roads. We stayed for about five days with Carmela's family, who were lovely people and made us feel welcome. Gabriel made us laugh when he got lost in the city, he had lived in for forty years, and I surprised everyone by buying some special Kashkaval cheese and Slivovitz in one of the hotels that the Bulgarians were forbidden to visit.

From there we went to Greece, and from Piraeus, we took a ship to Haifa. Since we had to wait another day for our car to be released, we took a taxi to our home in Herzliya.

From BRAZIL to FRANCE by ship – then by car; NICE-MONACO-AVIGNON-PARIS-ZURICH-SALZBURG-MUNICH-ZURICH-DOLMITEN-TRIESTE-YUGOSLAVIA-BULGARIA-GREECE... and from PIRAEUS to HAIFA again by ship. Taxi HOME – WOW! One of the nicest trips we ever made.

A couple of days after we arrived home, I went to Haifa to collect the car. A friend told me that I should wear my army uniform to go there, as I will be treated with more respect than a civilian. I accepted the idea and went in my uniform to the Customs Office in the Port. I gave all the papers to the clerk who was working there, and he made the calculations, taking into account that although it was a new car, it already had a lot of kilometers on the clock. When he told me the amount of money due, I was in shock, as the figure seemed enormous to me. I told him that I would have to think it over and come back to him. I suddenly saw somebody beckoning me to come over to him. He was a stranger who I had never met before or since. When I reached him, he said to me, “You went to the worst person. When he is not looking, go to the other clerk on the left side. Start everything again, and you will have a much better result.” I thanked him and did as he suggested. This clerk redid all the calculations, and amazingly the result was that I had to pay less than a quarter of what the first one had said. I quickly paid and drove off in my car, very happy because I had saved a lot of money. This doesn't happen anymore as everything is carried out by computer and not left up to individual discretion.

Once we got home, we had to get used to the enormous changes around us. It was a shock to see all the new houses and feel that our ‘pastoral’ area was now known as the Diplomatic Quarter. However, we were delighted with our neighbors, Judy and Ely Golan. Judy was the fantastic woman who took care of our garden during our absence and the neglect of the British Diplomat.

It was now the beginning of August 1973, and I had to find work as soon as possible. Keren Hayasod wanted me to go on working with them, but I wanted to try something different. Carmela had finished all the research work for her

Ph.D. in Brazil, but now she had to complete writing up her thesis and then go back to defend it and receive her title.

I have always had a certain Chutzpah and applied for high-ranking jobs without having any relevant experience. Tadiran, which was a large electronic company at the time, produced military equipment. One of its big complexes was looking for a person to act as its procurement officer, responsible for buying everything the company needed. I applied for the job and was asked if I was an engineer. I had to say no to that, but I did understand about electricity as I was a chief electrician on kibbutz Bror Chail. I also told them that I knew several languages and that I was competent. I also visited another big company, called Ha-Chevra ha-Israelit le-kufsaot pach. They produced huge metal barrels for transporting oil and other products.

I applied for jobs in these two companies despite being told by several friends that I didn't have the right qualifications. I replied that I was quite capable of learning and becoming successful. Eventually, the Director-General from Tadiran called to tell me that out of 20 applicants, they had narrowed it down to two candidates — me being one of them. The other candidate was an engineer, which was an advantage, but they would come back to me if he refused the job. The next day, I didn't hear from him but met an acquaintance, Itzhak Fogel, from Uruguay, who owned a TV company. He contacted me because he had heard that I was looking for work, and as television had now become popular in Israel, he offered me a position as a purchase manager for their factory. It was a big factory that produced 2000 televisions per month on an assembly line. Part of the kit came from Metz, a German company, and other materials were produced in Israel. Once he had offered me the job, I didn't wait to hear from Tadiran but reached an agreement with Itzhak and began working there on Friday, October 5th, 1973, which turned out to be the day before the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War.

On my first day, Fogel introduced me to all my colleagues, and then the following week, they had all disappeared. All the men apart from Fogel, who had Uruguayan nationality, the chief engineer as he was nearly 60, and me were the only ones to remain. Although I was still army age, I wasn't called up as I had been abroad for four years and missed some special training. About 40 women were



Carmela and Mimi waiting for Yaron and Tomy



Yaron and Mina

working on the assembly line, but it was a tough period as we were under terrible pressure all the time.

There was a very different feeling during this war than in previous conflicts. During the Yom Kippur War, we often felt that we were losing and that our country would cease to exist. One day during the evening news, the Army spokesman, Major General Aharon Yariv, said, "I want to tell you, at night I sleep like a baby." He then added, "I wake up every hour and cry." We were all anxious, but with some help from America, we eventually won. Kissinger was very strong during those days, and he offered his support but with several conditions.

During the war, my boss Itzchak Fogel, very kindly, sent a TV set to us at home. Televisions were still something quite new in Israel, and he thought we should have one, to be able to follow what was happening. One day, he came to visit us with his wife and two children. Unfortunately, there was an air raid siren during their visit, and Fogel asked where our shelter was. We didn't have one but used the downstairs bathroom, which had reinforced walls. He decided that he and his family would go and shelter in there. We put some chairs and a small table in the bathroom, and Carmela brought them coffee and cake and drinks for the children. We got the all-clear within about half an hour, and although it was a worrying situation, it was also quite funny.

Once the war was over, the other workers returned to the factory, and I started working as the Purchase Department Manager. I had to purchase goods from Israel as well as abroad, mainly from the German company Metz. Later we began to buy household appliances from other companies, such as washing machines, dishwashers, etc. I had an interesting job, but after three successful years in which I reduced the company's expenses, I was disappointed that some of the promises made to me didn't materialize. Gradually I concluded that my future wasn't in this company. It seemed to me that I made a lot of effort, but somebody else made all the profit, and I decided it was time to move on. It seemed that private industry was not my dream.

By chance, at the same time, Shalom Dror from Keren Hayesod approached me to come back to work there and help create a special program. The initial proposition was for a few months' work, although in fact, it turned out to be an activity that lasted for more than 30 years.

We settled back into daily life in Herzliya. I was working at Metz, and Carmela continued to work on her Ph.D. As I mentioned previously, her friends in Brazil typed it up for her in Portuguese but making corrections and sending it backward and forward was complicated, as computers didn't exist, and it took a long time. In the beginning, Carmela said that she wanted to leave it, but I encouraged her to continue, telling her that she deserved to earn the title of Ph.D.

At the beginning of 1974, we decided that Carmela and Iris should go to Brazil for two or three months to finish working on it. They stayed with my parents, and in the end, it took more than five months to complete. About three weeks after they left, Carmela called with some fantastic news. She had just found out that she was pregnant — and she was at the beginning of her third month. I was happy, although a little worried, as a pregnant woman is a little more delicate, but she was with my parents, so I knew she would be well looked after. Time passed a little bit slower for me while Carmela and Iris were away, although I spent time with friends, especially Ervin and Mitzi Semmel, and other good friends, Benjamin and Channa Reicher.

My parents had a vacation booked to go to Campos do Jordão, a few months later but didn't want to leave Carmela and Iris in the house by themselves. Rosa and Fiszal Czeresnia invited Carmela and Iris to come and stay with them, which they did. Fiszal had helped Carmela from the beginning and lent her a car to drive to the University and back, from my parents' house. This was an enormous help as Carmela was able to take Iris to kindergarten before going on to University and pick her up again on the way home. Carmela completed her Ph.D. and presented her thesis in front of many students and teachers in Portuguese. She received excellent reports (Nota 10) and earned the title of Doctor. Richard (Dick) Weiss, and the three friends who had helped her so much, Rosali, Sueli, and Rose Angela were very proud of her — and of course, also her husband from a distance of over 10,00 kilometers.

Carmela had an unfortunate incident one day as she walked quickly along one of the university corridors. She fell over and didn't feel the baby moving afterward. She went straight to a doctor who checked her out. The baby's heart was beating strongly, and then he started moving again, so all was well. When our son was born, he had a mark on his foot that looked like an onion. During

her pregnancy, Carmela had a strong craving for onion soup. Tasia and Moises (good friends of ours from the days of Friends of the Histadrut), had taken her the day before she fell to a vegetable market about half an hour out of São Paulo to visit a restaurant with the best onion soup. Unfortunately, it was closed, and Carmela was very disappointed. We thought that maybe the mark on Yaron's foot somehow left a symbol of our son's history. The result is that Yaron hates onions; he can't stand to eat or even smell an onion.

However, my wife encountered a much bigger problem when she planned to fly home as the airline told her she couldn't fly in her advanced stage of pregnancy. I was in Israel and didn't know anything about it. Carmela didn't give up and took the night bus to Rio de Janeiro to meet the airline's Director. She practically cried to him and explained that her young daughter was in São Paulo, her husband was in Israel, and she needed to go home.

Carmela received permission to fly, and luckily, they arrived back before Yaron appeared. If he had been born on a flight, he would have had free air travel for the rest of his life, but we were happy that he was born in Israel on October 25th, 1974. Carmela had been gone from February to August and arrived home with Yaron three quarters cooked and a Ph.D. title — not a small feat.

As a child, Yaron flew with us a lot; to Argentina and back, Germany and back, flights within Argentina and all-around Europe and the USA during our stay in Germany. After the army, he took a special trip to Canada and the US, and after University, while working in Rafael, he traveled to India, Spain, and other countries. Later he went to live in the USA, came back married, and then returned to the States. A globetrotter. What a fantastic, smart, intelligent, and quite brilliant young man we have. How lucky we are.

Carmela had been in touch with Jesuina during her stay in Brazil, and she came to visit Carmela and Iris from time to time. Before they arrived back in Israel, I phoned Jesuina and asked her if she would like to come to Israel to be with us and take care of our two children. She was working with a family we knew, but the idea of coming to be with us was more attractive, and she accepted.

I went to the Ministry of the Interior and asked a woman what I needed to do to bring a maid over from Brazil. She gave me some information and told me

to send it to the office in Jerusalem. She wasn't very helpful, but somebody else called me into his office, lowered his voice, and told me he had heard my request. He asked me some odd questions, for instance, if the woman was Black and if she looked strange. He said I would never receive a reply from the Ministry and eventually told me to bring her — nothing will happen. (Today, of course, everything is very different.) We paid for Jesuina's ticket, and she entered the country as a visitor and stayed here from 1974 till 1980 when we left for Argentina.

We were very lucky with Mina. She took excellent care of our children from the beginning, and it was great for us to know that we had someone at home to provide us with child-care. She was a very smart woman, and we sent her to an Ulpan, and although she did well, she stopped going after a couple of months. We understood later that she never learned grammar, and when they began to teach it at Ulpan, she was ashamed that she couldn't cope. She knew a lot of Hebrew, and when our neighbor, Judy, needed to speak to another neighbor but they didn't have a common language, they called Jesuina to translate from Ladino to Hebrew. We laughed about that a lot.

Carmela had a couple of false alarms before Yaron was born, but eventually, the doctors decided that it would be best to perform a Cesarean section because of the baby's position. I surprised the surgeon, Professor Mencher, who we had chosen to attend the birth, by asking if he could operate horizontally instead of vertically. Esthetically, a horizontal scar would look better in the future if Carmela wanted to wear a bikini. Professor Mencher was surprised that a husband had future thoughts about his wife's elegance instead of being paralyzed with fear about the surgery. Obviously, I was worried about it all, but I also knew how my wife would feel in the future. He agreed, all went well, and our lovely baby boy was born.

We held the brit mila party at Tel Hashomer Hospital a week later and brought a bag with everything the baby needed for when we went home. When we arrived at the hospital, we left the bag on top of the car, and when I returned a few minutes later, it had disappeared. This was a problem, as it was Friday afternoon, and everything was closed. We managed somehow and said that if somebody needed all that baby equipment so badly, we should wish them good luck.

Of course, I was thrilled to have my family back home with me and a lot of respect for my wife — who now held the title of Doctor. I often joke that I am the odd one out in my family as Carmela and my children were officers in the army, and they all have high university degrees. Then there is me — I left University at the end of the first year, I have no title after my name, and I served most of my army service on the kibbutz. As a reservist, I was first in Anti Air Force and then in Intelligence. So — no academic title and, “not qualified Vice Corporal” in the Army.

The reality is that I am the one in charge of my family and take care of everything.



In the end, it's not the years
in your life that count.
It's the life in your years.

Abraham Lincoln



Losses, Adventures, New Journey

For most people in the world, parents are very special, and much loved. Mine are no exception, maybe even more so as I am perfectly aware of how much I owe them for being as I am.

During my time in Israel, my parents had only been to see us once, although my mother came for a special 'inspection' visit shortly after I came on Aliya. In 1975, when my father was 80, they came to visit us. We held a special party for them in our house and invited all our family and many of our friends and also acquaintances of my parents from Poland who had survived the camps and emigrated to Israel. It was a wonderful event and a very successful visit. It was successful for me in another way, as I felt that at last, my father was seeing me in a positive light. When I left university and came to Israel, my father saw me as a failure. He was very disappointed that his son wasn't going into higher education and felt that I wasn't doing anything useful with my life. He saw my going to Israel and planning to live on a kibbutz as a strange thing to do. I think the first time he realized that his son was a success, was when he was here with us and saw that I had a good job, a nice house, and a loving wife and two wonderful children. We didn't talk about it directly, but he mentioned once, "How nice to see you in this different new atmosphere." It was very

important to me that I knew that my father changed his impression of his son and saw me as a man to be respected.

The following year, 1976, my mother passed away. She had heart problems, and her heart finally gave way. I was already working at Keren Hayesod, and they gave me some vacation time so that I could go to Brazil. The Director of Keren Hayesod at that time was Shay Kreutner (from 1968 to about 1979). He was tough but he was respected. He wasn't always liked by some of the Campaigns due to the importance he gave to the work of Jerusalem's central office, but he was always in order with me.

Marietta flew in from America, and it was strange, when I got off the plane at São Paulo airport, waiting to go through customs, I saw my sister not far from me, also going through customs. It just happened we both came on the same day, for the funeral in the afternoon and arrived from different destinations at the same time.

Rabbi Pincus who was the Chief Rabbi of the Ashkenazi Conservative community — let's say of the Reform synagogue, not an orthodox synagogue — spoke at the funeral. In his eulogy, he said, "I will never forget Elisa, and I have to mention a story. We used to go on vacation to a very nice place, and Elisa and Rudi Drucker also went there. We were in the same hotel, called Toriba in Campos do Jordão. I was sitting in the library reading, and Elisa came and took my hand, saying: 'Rabbi, Rabbi, come with me. You must come.' I didn't know what she wanted, but I got up. I knew Elisa, and she took me out, in front of the hotel. The hotel is situated in a fantastic place, the sun was slowly going down and the view was unbelievable. Elisa said, 'Rabbi, look at this view. It is much more human and richer. I am not speaking against the book you are reading. But look and feel.' I was deeply impressed by the love this woman had for people and nature. I will never forget this moment with her."

After about two weeks, I had to say goodbye to my father and fly back to Israel to my family and Keren Hayesod. It was not a happy situation as my father remained alone in Brazil.

In 1977, my father came to visit us again. We would have been happy if he had wanted to come and live with us, but my mother had made me promise that

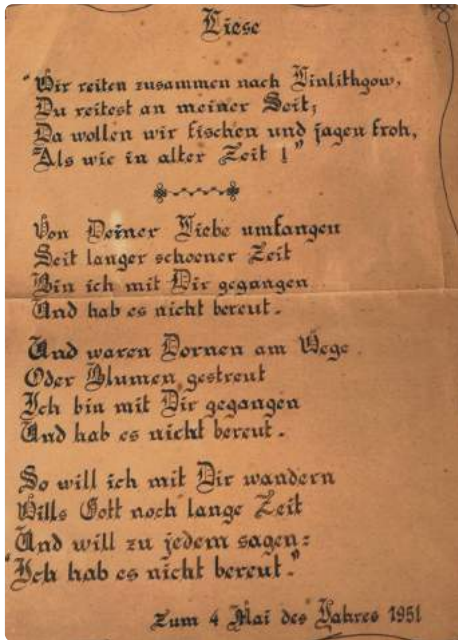
I would not influence or press him to come. It had already been difficult enough for my father to leave Poland, his factory, and his family, and to adapt to a new life in Brazil. My mother understood that for him to move a second time would be very difficult. She was right because I asked my father if he would like to come and live in Israel, and he said, "I don't think so. I don't know the language. I like to come to visit you, to be with you, but to live here is not for me."

Unfortunately, during the time he was with us, he had a heart attack. He recovered, but it was very difficult. Carmela took fantastic care of him, but at the end of two months in Israel, he asked to go back to Brazil. I went back with him as he could not travel alone. Again, Keren Hayesod gave me permission to take time off to travel back with my father to Brazil. At times, even until today, it disturbs me that I did not fully understand how difficult the trip was for my father, and the fact that he had to go back to be alone in São Paulo. On our trip back, we stayed for one night in Zurich, and I regret that for dinner, I went to eat downstairs in the dining room, and not in our room with my father. I stayed for one week but then I had to return home.

Sometime during 1978, Carmela went to visit my father. She went alone, and he was delighted because he loved Carmela very much. He had created a strong attachment, and he had an outstanding and fantastic opinion of my wife, which I understand because she deserves it — really deserves it. My father was very happy to have Carmela with him for two weeks, and she was happy to be in Brazil with him. Carmela also had her friends from the university, also Fiszel and Rosa, with whom Carmela was very much in contact.

Carmela came back, and unfortunately, after a few months, my father also said goodbye. He, too, had problems with his heart and passed away. It's very sad to lose your parents, even if it's the normal way of life. The only positive thing I can say about my parents passing is that they both had heart problems. Something happened, they went to the hospital, and two or three days later: no more. That means, even in this sad situation, it's one of the best ways to go — without suffering.

After my father died, Marietta and I were in Brazil, and we had to liquidate the house. It wasn't ours, but everything inside the house was. We wanted to sell the furniture and other items and had to decide what precious pieces we each



A love poem from my father to my mother



My parents



My parents with Iris and Yaron in Israel, 1975

wanted to take home as a remembrance. We stayed in São Paulo for another three or four weeks in order to settle it all.

A funny story: there was a telephone in the house. This was in 1978 and wasn't like today with iPhone, iPad and I don't know what else. The phone was very valuable in Brazil and was worth about a thousand dollars or more. I wanted to sell it. A gentleman came along and said, "I want to buy the telephone", which we had advertised in the newspaper. I said "Okay" and told him, "My father will sign the transfer of the telephone for you. If you pay me the money, then he will advise the telephone company and bring it to your house." I told him that my father was not feeling very well and was upstairs, so I asked him to give me the transfer papers and I will go and get him to sign it, and then we can make the transfer. He gave me the papers, and I went upstairs, he stayed downstairs having a coffee with my sister. I went to my father's room, who obviously wasn't there as he had died the week before. So, I signed the papers, very legal, very..., and I went down and gave him the papers, and he paid me the money. We made the transfer, and all okay. Finished. Probably today this would be impossible. In 1978, control was not so strong. Nobody checked if the day my father had signed at home was one week before or one week after he was not alive anymore. So, we liquidated our house, and each of us sent home some of the things we wanted to save. Maybe you know how much some Brazilian government members steal — millions... NO! billions. So, a poor telephone line — no reason to be ashamed.

My parents both went within two years of each other, leaving me an orphan at 47. Even now, at 91 years old, I still miss them and frequently think how they would react to various matters, and how much I would like to have a nice conversation with them.

Considering Lincoln's quote at the beginning of this chapter, it gives me a good feeling that despite the difficult change they had to make from Bielsko to São Paulo, and the terrible tragedy of the Holocaust, they had a full life and could enjoy their children and grandchildren.

We had returned from Brazil in September 1973, and I worked at Metz factory for three years. Around July 1976 I began my activities at Keren Hayesod. Initially I had planned to be there for some months and then decide. It turned

out I was there for over 30 years. At the beginning I was assistant to the Vice-Director General, Zvi Etzioni. Some colleagues tried to advise me against working with Etzioni, as they felt that I wouldn't be happy and that he might betray me. The reality was the exact opposite. Zvi Etzioni was extremely efficient, very friendly, and we developed a good and warm relationship. I am sad that Zvi Etzioni is no longer alive, as through our entire working time, he treated me well, and we had a warm and friendly association.

There was a woman at Keren Hayesod called Geula Mareli, who was Head of Human Resources. From the beginning she was very sympathetic and helped me with several details that became important. I was originally offered an office that I would share with a secretary. I did not see any problem, but Geula told me not to accept it, as she knew that if I were sitting in a room with a secretary, I would be considered one as well, and suggested I ask for my own office, which I did. She also asked me what social benefits I had received in Brazil from Keren Hayesod. When I told her that I hadn't received any, she took care that I receive full compensation. Our friendship continued to be a good and positive one.

My job was mainly involved in dealing with guest speakers, which I found very interesting. Keren Hayesod invited high-level guest speakers from universities and political parties, and although no payment was involved, many were happy to go abroad for Keren Hayesod. I already spoke in some detail about Arik Sharon's visit to Brazil; other speakers included Minister Moshe Baram, Minister Yitzhak Modai as well as Yitzhak Shamir, Chaim Herzog, and Abba Eban. Later on, in Argentina, I had the pleasure of receiving our delegate in the United Nations, Yehuda Blum.

I would like to mention a very special event in which I participated that left a very powerful impression. During the time I managed all the aspects of Project Renewal for Keren Hayesod, there were many inaugurations with the donors who made the projects possible. Most of the ceremonies I had to direct, but the one where I was a guest was the inauguration of the ORT Ronson School in Ashkelon in the presence of British PM Margaret Thatcher. I believe I did not shake hands with her but only with the Ronson family.

I participated in a very special meeting with Moshe Dayan, although he was already quite unwell. Zvi Etzioni had a good relationship with him, and after they met, Dayan agreed to visit Australia for us. The trip was extremely successful, but he had to travel via South Africa because his health did not permit him to make the trip in one go. He spent two days in South Africa and then continued to Australia.

In my work with speakers, I was lucky to have received a most efficient secretary, Ety Nagary, who is still my friend today. She organized the filing system and modernized our inefficient way of looking for speakers. Ety came from Peru and was a Rabbi's daughter. Much too religious but a remarkable person.

I want to especially mention a guest speaker with whom I became quite close. Dr. Yosef Burg held many Ministerial roles in Israeli Governments, almost from the creation of the State of Israel until he passed away. He represented the United Religious Front. I don't want to enter too much into Israeli politics, but at that time, it was a positive religious party. Today, unfortunately, the situation has changed, and I cannot say that the two main religious parties are positive — quite the contrary. In my opinion, they hold back the country's development. Dr. Burg was welcome anywhere, but he was especially requested by the Jewish German and Austrian communities. He would never say the words Germany or Austria but said: "I am going to Ashkenaz."

Dr. Burg was a member of the Israeli group who went to America after Sadat's historic visit to Jerusalem for the peace talks in Washington with President Carter. After visiting America, Burg was supposed to fly to Germany for the Keren Hayesod event. One day, at 3.00 in the morning the telephone rang at home, and Carmela answered it and told me, "There's a Dr. Burg on the line for you." I jumped out of bed and ran to get the phone. He said "Look, I am with the circus here in America.".. He always brought humor into everything — and that's the way he talked. "I am with the circus here in America, and I am supposed to go to Ashkenaz, but there is so much going on with our neighbor country (Egypt) that I cannot go to Ashkenaz. Please let them know that I will visit there in the near future." He was aware that it was early in the morning in Israel, and he apologized, telling me, "I did not want the secretary to call you. I wanted to call myself to say I am sorry and know that you will say

the right thing to the people in Ashkenaz.” That was Dr. Burg – someone special in many ways.

On other occasions when he went somewhere for Keren Hayesod, he always phoned me when he came back and said, “Come to my office. I’ll settle my accounts with you.” It was very simple. As a guest speaker, we obviously paid for his ticket and the hotel and provided him with a small amount for his daily expenses. Dr. Burg was the only one who gave me money back, saying, “Look, I went for seven days, but only five days were for Keren Hayesod. The other days were for my Party. So, I am giving you back the money I received for the other two days.” That didn’t happen with anyone else. I have a special appreciation for him, and I also had contact with him later when I was in charge of Project Renewal.



Etty Nagari



Vacation in Nuweiba. Rachel, Gavriel, Carmela and Yaron



Rufus and Caren



Carmela at an Ort event

In 1975, after her maternity leave, Carmela became a Chemistry teacher in the city of Yehud. She was quite fundamental there, creating a very nice chemistry department. Carmela had a very interesting job there until we left for Argentina.

In early 1980, the new Director-General, Yacov Gilead, who was also quite tough but much warmer than Shay Kreutner and was recently back from five years as Director of the important British Campaign, called me and asked me to take care of a guest, Mr. Issy Magid, Chairman of the Australian Campaign. I picked him up and took him to his hotel in Tel Aviv, and during our journey, Mr. Magid asked me various questions about my past and my early life in Brazil. I could tell that he was impressed by what I was telling him, and a couple of days later, I discovered that he had spoken to Gilead and requested that I become the delegate in Australia for the Keren Hayesod. However, Gilead had another candidate in mind and so wasn't pleased about this proposal. I wasn't too keen to go to Australia, partly because it's so far away and I didn't know much about it. However, I also thought that I was too new in Keren Hayesod to be strongly opposed to the Director-General. I wrote a nice letter to Magid, and he accepted my decision.

During this time, I had no company car and used to travel to Jerusalem with a colleague, Yaki Eshel. Every trip with him was an adventure and a dramatic occasion, including many colorful remarks that he made along the way. We became very good friends.

A month later, Gilead told me that they urgently needed a delegate to manage the campaign in Argentina and that he wanted me to go. I agreed to go there but also asked for some preparation beforehand. I told him that I would like to know the British and Canadian campaigns because these two campaigns were very good and efficient. He agreed and organized a visit to England, where I spent a week learning how everything was organized. It was very good and helped me when I was in Argentina. I was supposed to be leaving in July but suddenly in May, the Director told me that he wanted me to go straight away as there was some crisis there. He wanted me to leave that week and my family to join me in two months. It's important to explain that Carmela knew all the details and agreed to go to Argentina. She is a fantastic partner whose reactions were always together with me and for the good of our family. I am incredibly

lucky to have her. Regarding the idea of me going sooner and alone, she also found it wasn't appropriate for us. I advised Gilead that I would only agree to leave with my family in July.

When I told him my decision, he was annoyed and said that he would have to find another candidate. (Good luck with that!) That didn't happen, and in the end, a week later, he told me, "You know what? I prefer that you go even in July."

As soon as I agreed to go to Argentina, I became a Diplomat. I received a diplomatic passport and became a member of the Israeli delegation in Buenos Aires. The foreign office asked me, it wasn't a legal request, but they wanted me to use a Hebrew name, and not Drucker.

This change of name became a family joke. Carmela and I decided to use the name that I had on the kibbutz when I was active in the youth movement. I used an Israeli name: Dar. I was called Jochanan Dar. In Hebrew Dar is the inside of an ocean shell. This is quite a valuable material, somehow connected with pearls. We went to the Ministry of Interior to change our name, and there was a horrible line. I think it took about two hours, which is ridiculous, but never mind. Rosa Czeresnia who together with her husband Fiszal walked me down the aisle when Carmela and I got married, was with us, and we waited and we spoke and spoke, and only when we were quite near to the clerk where you change the name, she asked "Why are you here?" Carmela told her we are going to change our name because of the Israeli passport. So, Rosa said "Oh, how nice. What will your name be?" "Our name instead of Drucker will be Dar." Rosa said "My goodness! You know what Dar is in Portuguese? Dar is to give. I give. It's a verb. Giving. So, you will be called Carmela Giving? What are you giving? Everybody will say "So give to me too." Carmela was embarrassed — although I wasn't. I said "Well, then we need to change the name," but we were already near the front of the line and didn't want to have to wait again. It is difficult to explain in English, but Carmela took the paper and looked at the Dar and adding one line and one letter it became DEKEL which is a palm tree. So, instead of Dar, which is GIVING in Portuguese, a shell in Hebrew, we became Dekel — a palm tree.

We left at the end of July 1980. It was a complicated journey because we went to America first. Carmela, Iris, and Yaron were all with me, and we flew to New York. We visited some museums; Central Park; theater (Peter Pan), and

then to Washington and saw some fantastic exhibitions. Richard Weiss, Carmela's professor in Brazil insisted we stay at his home with him, his wife and two children which was very kind. They punished us with a strange dinner of vegetarian Indian food that we could not touch — but we survived. It was a very nice stay. After Washington we flew to Montreal.

At that time, the main Keren Hayesod campaign was in Montreal, whereas today, it is based in Toronto. We spent six days in Montreal, during which time I learned the Canadian campaign. It was a very interesting visit and I saw and learned a lot. Later on, in Argentina, however, where everything was so different, I recalled with envy the Canadian campaign, which was all open, and everything was very public. The atmosphere in Argentina was completely different, not only because of the military government but also because anti-Semitism in Argentina was fairly high. Even though the Jewish community was quite comfortable and lived freely, it could never be such an open campaign but had to be much more discrete.

After Montreal, we flew via Chicago to Las Vegas and spent three days there. It was quite an adventure as it was the first time in my life I was in Las Vegas. We were staying in a small bungalow at the Flamingo Hilton Hotel. I will never forget that in the morning, Carmela and the children were still sleeping, so I went to bring us back breakfast. To get to the dining room, I had to go through the casino. It was 9 in the morning, and I stopped to say good morning to a lady sitting by a slot machine. She answered me, so then I said to her, "This is my first time in Las Vegas, and I'm surprised to see you here so early." She looked at me as if I were a little retarded, and said "What do you mean early? I came last evening. I have been sitting here for about 15 hours!" I thought to myself, 'Is this normal here?'

We had a good time in Las Vegas and went from there to Los Angeles to visit my sister, Marietta, brother-in-law Rufus, and their daughter Caren, whom I had met for the first time in 1964. Marietta and Rufus lived in a very nice house and gave us a wonderful time in LA. We hired a car, and Caren came with us on an excursion from Los Angeles to San Francisco, stopping at Yosemite. Carmela, myself, and the children spent a few days in San Francisco before flying to Brazil. Caren, aged 16, returned alone to LA.

I stopped for three days in Rio de Janeiro to oversee what was happening there and then went to São Paulo for a few days' vacation and work before traveling to Buenos Aires. Carmela and the children flew directly to São Paulo. We stayed at Fiszel and Rosa's nice house.

In October 1980, we arrived in Buenos Aires for my new position. We spent the first three weeks in a kind of hotel, not very far from the Israeli embassy, while we looked for an apartment. Obviously, I speak reasonable Spanish, and I also started to make appointments for work. I had two offices — one private office in the Embassy on the third floor, and the other in the Campaign's general office in the Jewish quarter and spent time in both places. I was the Director-General of the campaign in Argentina and had another three delegates from Keren Hayesod working with me. There was the Vice-Director with whom life was sometimes very difficult, a Director for the younger generation, who was very efficient, and a Director for smaller cities. Argentina is a big country, and the Jewish community was quite widespread. Today the community is smaller but during our stay it was around half a million.

My connection with Keren Hayesod became something very special. I think that it was very lucky for me to come to work with this Central Israeli Institution and to be able to know the Jewish communities directly. Some places I just visited, but I also spent some years in others, such as Brazil; Argentina; and Germany. Later on, when I was dealing with wills and trust activity I was in France; Portugal; Spain; Colombia; Venezuela; Bolivia, Brazil, and Argentina. I also had a lot of contact through annual meetings in Israel with many other Jewish communities.



It's not in the stars to hold our destiny,
but in ourselves.

William Shakespeare

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We arrived in the beautiful city of Buenos Aires at the end of 1980. All things are relative, but generally speaking it was already a modern city, and had a Metro system since 1913. They took the model from Paris and also built many squares similar to those in Paris. It's a very nice city with some beautiful buildings and especially many, many marvelous trees.

There are some lovely locations in Argentina, especially a place called Bariloche, which is an interesting tourist city in the South. It's a nice place to visit in the summer, and you can go there to ski in the winter. Unfortunately, too many German Nazis came to live there after the Second World War as Peron, the President, opened up the country to allow them entry when they ran away from Europe.

When we arrived, Argentina was under a powerful, violent, and cruel dictatorship. The military had taken over, and they were holding the country very much under their power. It was the period known throughout the world as the time of the Desaparecidos, meaning the people who “mysteriously” disappeared.

There was active opposition by groups who met and demonstrated in secret because officially you were not allowed to do so. From time to time, they killed some important people in the military. So, if the military suspected somebody, they took him for interrogation, and quite frequently, he disappeared.

In our Keren Hayesod office, there was a very nice woman — Joana Sender, originally from Spain. A Jewish lady (everybody working in our office was

Jewish) who told us this story. She and her family were having dinner one evening when two men came to the door, dressed the way the Nazi's used to dress. That means a long fur coat, and said, "Oh, we are sorry to interrupt. We would like to ask your son one or two questions because maybe he can help us with some photos. He probably knows people from the University." Her husband wanted to tell them: "We are having dinner now. Come tomorrow" but this was impossible. So, the son got up and said, "Let's go to the other room." There they showed him various photos and asked him if he recognized anybody. When they came back, they said, "We really apologize, but we have to ask you to come to the police station on the corner. It is only a few meters from here, and maybe the machine there is clearer, so you will be able to see better." The son said "Okay, I'll come with you." Then he turned to his father and said, "By the way Daddy, you know I always forget to tell you." He took off his watch and said, "It has a defect, and I always want to ask you please, to send it for repair." It was a valuable watch, a present from his father. The son knew he was in danger and wanted to leave a memory. After that, he completely disappeared. They never knew what happened to him. The only thing that remained was his watch. The son was not a terrorist or a freedom fighter. But maybe, just maybe, he had met some of the people who opposed the military, and his name appeared in some papers belonging to those captured. That was enough of a reason to be taken away.

That was the atmosphere during the three years we were there. Argentina has always had economic problems and now, the military Government was beginning to weaken because it was so bad. There was a group called The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. It was given that name because the President's house was in a big square called Plaza de Mayo (May). They used to demonstrate every day, and every evening in front of the palace, because their sons or husbands or brothers had just disappeared. Slowly this demonstration became world known.

Later, after the war, somebody was swimming in the Tigre River and suddenly saw that he was swimming among dead bodies. They found about 30 or 40 bodies, cut in pieces. There aren't any big fish there, so the bodies weren't eaten and just stayed there.

During 1982 — one year before we returned home, a huge opposition demonstration was planned. However, the day before it was due to occur,

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the Military made a dramatic statement declaring that they took back the Malvinas islands, also known as the Falkland Islands. It's not very far from Argentina in the South of the Atlantic and had been occupied by England. Argentina had been saying for years that the islands belonged to them and eventually, in April 1982, they sent military groups there by surprise, and as there was no big defense from England, they took over the islands. Obviously, this created a lot of national feeling, and the anti-government demonstration was canceled.

However, Argentina had not taken into account, that the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, was quite stubborn and serious. She said, "We will not let Argentina stay on the island. This is British territory. They occupied it. We are going to take it back." She sent a fleet to the South, which took some time to arrive. The Argentinians saw Margaret Thatcher as a horrible witch, and there were caricatures of her in the Argentinian press.

In the beginning, Argentina was in euphoria about having the Islands back, thinking that they could visit there. Corruption and inefficiency made sure that nothing was done to increase the defense of the Islands, and the soldiers there were very badly treated and weren't even fed properly. When the British eventually arrived, they took the Islands back. At the beginning the Argentinian Army fought well and succeeded in sinking a large British vessel but after this the English soldiers took the Islands almost without fight. Sad, but the badly nourished defense was half asleep when the Gurkhas (Indian special force) came and simply cut their throats. It was a big embarrassment for the Argentinian military, and soon after, the military fell. By the time we left in 1983, the Government was already returning from military control to normal elections and democracy.

Short diversion: maybe I am special... or I am just lucky. All three countries where we went to represent Israel had special and very interesting situations — not always pleasant as in Brazil and Argentina, or so surprisingly positive as in Germany. In Brazil, we had military police and there were many issues. Carmela had a problem with the gun in her bag once when the DOPS interrogated her and in Argentina, we were in the middle of all this situation. I had to be very careful, doubly careful because I was trying to raise money for Israel, but Argentina was fighting a war. So, I had to avoid anything getting out. We didn't

need a journalist publishing, “Argentiniens fighting for their lives and the Jews sending money abroad.” This would be ridiculous because the Jews were feeling very Argentinian. Later in Germany we had an Israeli war, a huge immigration and the fall of the Berlin Wall and German unification.

Back to Buenos Aires: As always, I have a private story about anti-Jewish feeling which is quite interesting. We stayed in a hotel for the first three weeks not very far from the embassy. I spoke a little Spanish, although I wasn’t totally fluent. I was not the only Israeli delegate who had passed through the hotel, but I was one of the few who spoke Spanish, and I became quite friendly with the hotel manager. We spoke freely about all kinds of things. One morning he said to me, “Mr. Dekel, please come with me a moment.” He took me to the end of the lobby. There was nobody else there, and we sat down and began to talk. He asked me, “Mr. Dekel, You are Israeli, yes?” I said, “Yes, I am Israeli.” He lowered his voice and said, “I don’t want to offend you, but are you also a Jew?” I looked at him, and said, “Sure, yes. I am an Israeli, and I am a Jew. There are mainly Jews in Israel, but there are also Christians, and Arabs who are Muslims. There are also Bedouins who have a slightly different religion from the Muslims. And why not? But I am a Jew.” And he looked at me and said a sentence that is so well known in the world: “You don’t look Jewish.” So, I looked at him, I don’t remember his name, (pity), and I said — in a friendly way because the conversation was very friendly — I said: “Do you know a lot of Jews in Buenos Aires?” He was embarrassed and replied, “No.” I asked him, “Do you know any Jews?” “Maybe, but I don’t know. I am not sure.” I asked him, “How can you say that I do not look Jewish? You don’t know a Jew. So, why don’t I look Jewish?” So, you see? (I had no horns and no tail. Also, not the terrible crooked nose of caricatures).

He didn’t have a negative approach towards me, but he had a built-in antisemitic feeling about Jews. That was a problem generally in Argentina. I cannot say that Carmela, me, and our children — Iris was ten and Yaron was six, felt antisemitism. I don’t believe they did, but the situation was there, and I will explain other events that occurred during the three years we were there.

The two places where antisemitism was felt the most were in the army and the navy. We had a Jewish friend who worked in the navy as a doctor, and she told us, “God forbid that anybody finds out that I am Jewish. They don’t know, and

they speak freely near me. And they see Jews as low-class animals. If they would know I am Jewish, I could never work there.” Obviously in my humble opinion she should never have gone to work there but maybe life has its demands.

Two horrible incidents took place after we left. The first was the explosion at the Israeli Embassy on March 17th, 1992, nine years after we left, causing the death of 29 people, and wounded 246. During the time I worked in Argentina I had an office there and now one of my substitutes was at work in the Embassy. When he heard the explosion, he ran to open the door and stopped in his tracks. Our office was on the third floor, and everybody and everything in front of his door, including the corridor, had fallen. He was lucky as his office had not fallen down. If he hadn't stopped when he got to the door, he would have fallen seven or eight meters. It was a very tragic incident. I phoned him in the evening at home and he was still in complete shock and could barely speak to me.

Another, even more, horrible incident was the bombing of the Jewish community's social center, called the AMIA, where I think there were about 90 dead and about 300 or 400 wounded. These incidents were all organized by Iran, with the help of some people in the Argentinian Government. One or two newspapers reported that, “In this horrible incident, 220 Argentinians were wounded and 50 were killed. Also 40 Jews.” The Jews are not Argentinian? What are they then?

Generally speaking, the Jewish community as a whole did not take part in politics. There was no official opposition against the Military, but some Jews had strong opinions and opposed the regime. If caught they went to jail and could disappear.

For us, the Jewish community was very friendly. We became members of the Conservative synagogue, the largest synagogue in Argentina. It was well attended, and we used to go there from time to time because the synagogue is the place where you meet the community. The rabbi of the synagogue, Marshall Meyer, was very well known. He was very active politically, but not against the Government. This was not permitted, but he had his own opinions. Obviously, he was not in favor of the military regime, but if there were some Jews who went to prison, he immediately went to visit them. At first it gave them security. That means they could not now disappear. If there was a problem after the rabbi had visited somebody, they could not say that he was never there. Whenever he could, he tried to help, and we had some people in the Jewish community who he

helped disappear safely to Uruguay, and from Uruguay maybe to Israel.

When I was there as Director for Keren Hayesod, we had a very capable and interesting Ambassador, Dov Shmorack. He was a very good speaker, and I invited him sometimes to speak at our events. He also went sometimes to jail to visit Jews who were there. Not as much as Marshall Meyer, but he had good contact with people in the military, with generals and so on. He used to tell a kind of funny story, although it was actually true. A young Jew was in the army when something happened. The sergeant called all the soldiers together and said "This and this happened. You, Shlomo, Jew, you were there. You are to blame." Shlomo says, "I was not there." "Jew, we know you are a liar. You are a piece of dirt. A piece of shit. I have to punish you. I'm going to ask the officer to permit me to punish you severely." The officer came along and said, "Look, Sergeant, you have to consider one very important thing. There is that country, called Israel. We have good relations with them, and they send us a lot of military material. It is important to us. You have to respect the boy, because the Jews are Israel, and we have a good relationship with them. You cannot punish him!" Now, look at it. If Israel wasn't sending this equipment, they would have punished Shlomo. Maybe he would even have died there.

Israel at that time was exporting a lot of technological and military equipment to Argentina. There was also a very large delegation of Israeli diplomats and non-diplomats in Buenos Aires. The Israeli aircraft industry had, I think over 15 families there and there were another eight or nine families from the electronic and communication industries. Together with the embassy there were maybe 60 Israeli families there. The story about the soldier is only to show how ridiculous the whole situation was, and that antisemitism was there.

By the way, Israel was under a huge amount of pressure from England to stop sending anything to Argentina. The Israeli companies however said that they had to respect their contracts.

During the Falklands conflict, I had to speak with the Director of Keren Hayesod in England about a problem that had arisen. I called England and I told him "Well, you know we have to solve a problem, but we are at war at the moment. You are my enemy." He was someone from the Keren Hayesod whom I knew very well and so obviously he began to laugh.

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I had good relations with the Jewish community, and especially with the people working in the Campaign. As the Director General, I had to be very active with the community.

Argentiniens have a small problem — in that you never know exactly where you stand with them. They are embromados. A kind of Spanish word meaning near to confusing. Not offensive — just “not clear and open.” So, I always had to be quite careful in my contacts. But I was very lucky with the new CUJA (Campania Unida Judío Argentina) Chairman in Buenos Aires: Tito Sasson. An extraordinary person.

The fact that there were so many Israeli families made a need for an Israeli school. Some years before we came such a school was created. A private school with an Israeli program. Everything was just like a school in Israel, but it only went up till the age of 16. Our son went to this school from the age of six, but our daughter didn't. For the first two years she went to the American International school where they spoke English. It was not very easy for Iris as the needs of an 11/12-year-old girl were different. She made some friends, but for the last year she came back to the Israeli school, where she felt much more at home. They spoke Spanish in the Israeli school, although most of the classes were in Hebrew. Soon after we arrived in Argentina, Carmela — my special-outstanding and very qualified wife — was asked to become the Principal of the school as she was an experienced teacher, and extremely competent. Carmela accepted the position and for two and a half years, she was the Head of the Israeli school. She had a full school to take care of and she introduced various new initiatives and liked what she was doing.

When we arrived in October 1980, the dollar was very low — the only cheap thing in Argentina at that time. After about a month a couple we knew invited us to go out with them for coffee. We went to a nice coffeeshop and ordered drinks and snacks, but the cost for the two of us was a week's budget. It was incredible. We didn't go out again.

Many diplomats were asking to return to Israel or to receive a higher salary as they couldn't cope with everything being so expensive. Luckily for us and others, at the beginning of 1981 the economy changed. There was quite high inflation, and in a few weeks, the exchange rate fell from one dollar equaling

2,400 pesos to one dollar being worth 6,000 pesos, and then to one dollar being over 12,000 or even more. There was no linkage in Argentina meaning that an object that cost a certain price was now 6 or 10 times cheaper than some days before. You could buy a ticket around the world for a few hundred dollars. People were buying whatever they could. A lot of diplomats, not only Israeli, made quite a good business. I confess that Carmela had gone to Brazil to buy furniture for our apartment, so I was alone with the two children and preparing the whole of the following year's Campaign, so I was very busy. I didn't use this good opportunity to buy a lot of things — some but not a lot.

My big problem was that the contributions were all in pesos, and suddenly the value of the peso became much lower. The head office in Israel didn't understand these economic changes and there were some critics saying that we were doing less than before. They understood it later, when the same happened in South Africa and the world chairman was a South African. Suddenly the head office understood.

An important fact that I have to mention is that my STAR up there had a strong light and took good care of me and my family. Before I arrived, there were a lot of problems between the Israeli delegate and the local chairman. One or two months after I arrived, there were elections, and I was delighted that Tito Sasson, was elected as chairman. He had no public experience before, but he was a quick learner. I had public experience and obviously I did everything to help him. We had an excellent relationship. He was always extremely positive, extremely fair, and helpful. Working with this man, was one of the pleasures of being in Buenos Aires for three years and knowing Tito Sasson and his wife Anita. He had a wonderful yacht, and took us sailing, sometimes just me or sometimes with Carmela as well. He used to sail on the river Tigre with his family to Uruguay, maybe also to Brazil. It was a nice yacht, comfortable and a good size.

Unfortunately, some years later, he was sailing to Uruguay and had a heart attack when the boat was far out in the Atlantic Ocean. By the time the yacht reached the shore it was too late. Tito passed away on the yacht that he loved.

This was in 1987, and I was in Jerusalem when I heard about Tito's death. Knowing how much he had dedicated to Jewish and Israeli life I proposed

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to Keren Hayesod to honor him with the Goldstein Prize. This Prize is given, once a year, by Keren Hayesod in a special ceremony at the Knesset (Israel Parliament) to outstanding leaders. It was a very moving ceremony with his wife Anita and family present. He is the only one who received it posthumously. Looking back, I was lucky to have Tito as chairman. The position of Campaign Director — my job — is not an easy one. You have to show results and also be on good terms with the donors and community. The support of the chairman is fundamental. Also, at the beginning of my term there, Dr. Avraham Avihay, World Chairman of Keren Hayesod, came to Buenos Aires. His extremely warm introduction and compliments about me surely helped my reception and activity.

Despite all the problems, with the military, the Government, the economy, and some problems in the community, we had a very good time in Argentina. I know that both children adapted well and enjoyed their time there. Today I know that for Iris it was not always easy. She was aged 11 to 13 and didn't have the same friends around her. Looking to find new ones was quite awkward. We had a very nice and comfortable apartment, and the schools were good.

During the holidays we took a lot of trips, whenever there was an opportunity. We went to Bariloche, which is beautiful in spite of having a lot of Nazi's there. We went to the fantastic iceberg in the South, called Perito Moreno. We also visited the most Southern city in the world, called Ushuaia, and traveled from Bariloche to the Atlantic Ocean via Patagonia.

Unfortunately — our car broke down. It's quite a drive, the whole journey taking a little more than two days. Anyhow, when it happened, I had to take a big risk. I had to get into a passing car to the next city, and then come back to pick up our car. They could only take me, so I left Carmela, Iris and Yaron alone in the middle of nowhere. I would never do it again, although as it happens, due to the Government's violent behavior, there were very few thieves and human attacks. The police force was so strong and violent, that there was little criminal activity. They were really afraid when I went but I knew that Carmela would be able to cope with the situation. Really, it took me only two hours to go to the next city and to bring a car back, but I was quite worried during those few hours. It was 1981 — there were no cell phones, or computers and no way to communicate. Frightening.

We succeeded in fixing the car and drove to a fantastic place by the Atlantic Ocean, called Peninsula Valdes, where there were about three million penguins. I think it is a fantastic place. It's not only penguins there but also sea lions. It was like a dream for the children.

Another fantastic excursion was to the waterfalls of Iguacu. Carmela and I had been there on the Brazilian side, but now we were on the Argentinian side. When we were on the way to Iguacu, we stopped at a small city to check some details with the Tourism Company about the hotel we had booked in Iguacu. We parked the car and Carmela, and I entered the agency. We told our children not to go too far and gave them some money to buy some sweets from the shop on the corner. It took longer than we had planned and when we came out ready to go, we couldn't see them anywhere. We went to the corner, and a bit further on we saw our two children standing there, crying bitterly. Our hearts broke and our daughter, she was about 12, said, "I was sure you had abandoned us, like in the story of Hansel and Gretel." We embraced them and said, "How could you even think such a thing?" But that was their feeling that we had brought them to this city to leave them there and go away. We still sometimes speak about it, and I say "Iris, how could you think that?" I still don't know how that came to her, but that's how it was. Even now when I remember this it gives me a strange and disagreeable feeling.

We went, I think, three times to visit Brazil and once we went to the Carnaval in Rio de Janeiro. During one of these visits, we had a special adventure — and were very lucky. Yaron had fallen in Buenos Aires and hurt his arm. An X-ray was not too clear, but the doctor said better to put it in a cast. After one week the doctor did not want to take it off yet, but I felt it was doing damage to Yaron and had it removed. LUCKY! A fever, that we had not noticed, was causing the pain. Some weeks later, we were in Brazil, on vacation, and stayed in Rosa and Fiszal's house. Yaron, age 7, was playing in a corner of the room and we adults were sitting at a table. In our group there was one doctor and one psychiatrist. Both asked if Yaron had some problem, as they noticed that every few seconds he played with his fingers in a strange way. One of the doctors said that in the Middle Ages it was called "Dance of Saint Vitus" and people really danced until they fell down dead. They asked if Yaron had had a fever recently. We told them about the arm pain, and they understood that the Argentinian doctor was

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mistaken. He hadn't broken anything — it was the result of a fever. After a laboratory check the result became clear — Yaron had Rheumatic Fever, which is dangerous since it can attack the heart. To prevent that, you have to take antibiotics until age 20. How lucky we went to Brazil, how lucky that two doctors were at Fiszal that evening and how lucky we were to be staying there. He took antibiotics until he was 17, when a doctor in Germany said it was enough and he should stop. While we were in Brazil, we met Jesuina, our maid, and she said she will come back to Israel when we return. She also came once to Argentina to visit us.

Another good part of being in Argentina was that we made some good friends, particularly with one couple; Victor and Graciella Gorenstein. We went to their house a lot and we are still in contact today. Victor prepared fantastic Churrascos. In Argentina they say *assado*, and Americans say *barbecue*. Years later, when I traveled for Keren Hayesod, making Wills, Carmela and I went specially to Argentina to visit them, and they visit us whenever they are in Israel. We also became friends with two very nice and special Israeli couples. Efrat and Yosi Aroch. He was in charge of the security of the diplomatic group in South America. Yosi, a senior member of the Embassy, and I were in contact, and we still are today. Also, Efrat is close to Carmela, and our contact continues until now. The second couple, Pola and Reuven Agassi, both created companies after they returned to Israel and are very successful. Pola and Carmela remain close.

As I mentioned before, I had a problem with the man who was designated in Israel to be my Vice Director as he tried in every way to sabotage my work and spoke against me when I wasn't there. He didn't have much success and once was forced to apologize in front of the Ambassador. Some years later in Paris he apologized again in order to keep his position in Keren Hayesod.

When I advised the head office that I only wanted to stay for three years some influential European millionaires pressed the Keren Hayesod to nominate him Director after me and I was forced to accept this decision. In spite of all this when I came back to Israel Director Yacov Gilead had a very interesting job for me.

We left Argentina in the middle of 1983. Tito Sasson organized a very nice farewell party for Carmela and me. He also came with us to the airport when we were leaving, which was a great gesture as he was a very busy man.

Tito Sasson had an interesting background. He was a small man, a little Napoleon, and he had a textile factory that mainly made shirts. The only time in my life that I wore a tuxedo, was when he made a reception for Pierre Cardin, whose logo Tito used on his shirts and coats. When Cardin came to visit, Tito organized a reception and invited us to attend. Carmela had a nice dress obviously, and I had to have a tuxedo. I had never had one before, and this was the first and last time that I wore one. It was a fantastic reception in the most elegant hotel in Buenos Aires. You know, this also shows the kind of man he was, because I was not a businessman. I was there as the Director of the Keren Hayesod, and he was the chairman. Tito also invited some other people from the Embassy. And obviously the rabbi.

Unfortunately, I know that the President of the Campaign in São Paulo, where I was years before, would not have acted in this way. For him probably I was one of his employees. But Tito Sasson was a friend. He was someone we wanted to be in contact with.

We had a most interesting journey home. We flew to Mexico City where we met my sister Marietta and her daughter Caren. We saw pyramids, Mariachi, museums and the unbelievable central plaza with portraits by Diego Rivera. We went from Mexico City to Cuernavaca, where the temperature is permanently 20-22°C. We ate lunch at Las Mañanitas where the menu was shown on a big stone carried around by two strong waiters. From Cuernavaca we went to another dream place, Hacienda Vista Hermosa previously a Spanish castle, then a monastery, now a hotel. We enjoyed this place thanks to our good friends in São Paulo, Boris and Elena Saginur. From there, we carried on to Acapulco, which was not very interesting and then we went home via Los Angeles.

In Herzliya we met Mr. Van Staden from South Africa, who had rented our house. He and his wife arrived with one child and left with three and were fantastic tenants. At the time I understood that he was a diplomat, but later I was informed that actually he was from the secret service and that he had contact the whole time with the Israeli Mossad. He was a very nice tenant, and the house was in perfect condition. He was very serious and responsible and, as they used the garden so much, he put down a whole new lawn, and also fixed a lot of things.

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Tito Sasson at my farewell party



My farewell party

CHAPTER 16

Now we were back in Israel — and waiting to see where our next adventure would take us.



Iris and friend



Our friends Victor and Graciela Gorenstein

Life is a dream for the wise,
a game for the fool,
a comedy for the rich,
a tragedy for the poor.

Sholem Aleichem

Project Renewal

Soon after we returned home from Argentina, Carmela began to work in Ramat Gan as a Chemistry Teacher. The school Ort Chemia was part of the Ort Organization, but was not very developed, so she began to expand and improve the Chemistry Department. One day the General Director of Ort, Israel Goralnik, came to visit and received a complete update of the school. Goralnik was a very good and successful director, with a quick eye for opportunities and excellent human relations. He spoke with Carmela and told her he did not know that they had a teacher with PhD in Chemistry and asked her to be the Principal of the school when the present one retired.

A few months later Carmela became Principal of the school and was there for 5 years until we went to Germany in 1988. During her tenure she set up a new Biotechnological trend, Physical and Organic Chemistry. The school had an impressive science library in the name of Mr. Ebin. She checked who Mr. Ebin was, found him and invited him to visit the school. He was too old and not in good physical condition, but he sent a large check to help create the new departments. Carmela was very efficient and made a name for herself in ORT becoming much respected. She also changed the name of the school to ORT EBIN.

After we returned from Argentina I went back to work in Keren Hayesod, and in 1983 Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Director Shay Kreutner began a special initiative called Project Renewal. The basic idea of Kreutner was to link Jewish Communities with neglected areas in Israel. Begin saw an opportunity to create a broader national initiative in which the Government would also help the neglected areas. We had to connect Jewish communities worldwide with specific areas in Israel, where there were social problems. For instance, Schunat Hatikva in Tel Aviv, Katamon in Jerusalem, Schuna Dalet in Beersheba and many others. Keren Hayesod took it upon itself to organize the contact between overseas communities and these Israeli centers, and I was made responsible for this activity. It was a fantastic present from destiny or whatever because the five years I was active in it were so special. I loved the feeling of being involved in Israeli life, in real Israeli communities. I also had to convince the Jewish communities that they were doing good work but that maybe we needed a larger budget or more help. People in communities from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Argentina, Britain, Germany, and Italy all came to visit. They wanted to know and to see what was happening. So, if a group came from Italy and they were connected with the city of Sderot, I was the person who knew the Italians were going to come, and I was in contact with Sderot.

At that time, the mayor of Sderot was Amir Peretz, who later became a member of the government, and through him, we carried out many projects. The chief of the Italian group was a man called Gittis.

The contact and interest of the donors and the communities in the details of what was going to happen was very serious and sometimes quite moving. In time the Italian Jewish group put up a lovely sports center in Sderot and helped to finance various nonphysical projects. Activities, education etc... for the people involved.

I also enjoyed traveling from Herzliya to Jerusalem every day, and when needed, from Herzliya to Kiryat Shmona in the North and then back. Or from Herzliya to Jerusalem, from Jerusalem to Beersheba and home. I remember having meetings in Beersheba at six o'clock in the evening with the committee of the inhabitants of Beersheba Dalet. It was unbelievable the serious way that these people (regular people), not City leaders or anything like that, just people

who lived in a very problematic quarter, mainly in low social economic situations, reacted and were ready to participate. Instead of resting or drinking a beer with friends, people came to meet in someone's house or at the community center. We would sit for a couple of hours, drink coffee and discuss what we could do for the community with a certain amount of money. Sometimes it was, let's say, a small amount of money. It was not something enormous. It could be 5,000 dollars per year. We had to discuss whether to make a center to learn photography, or are we going to have a choir? There wasn't enough money for both. The serious and responsible way these people discussed the problem could be a model for our government or any government. This was something for themselves and their families. They also recognized this as a development for the future. It was fantastic to meet these people and to try and help. I always had to stress that I am not the Baron with the money but that I was only the delegate, a representative of the Baron. The Baron was the community overseas. If it was Beersheba Dalet, it was connected with the community in Germany. Beersheba Gimmel was connected with Argentina, which was special for me as I had lived there for three years and knew the country very well. The mayor of the city, Elyahu Nawi, also attended the meetings sometimes. He was a very serious and important mayor, a very good politician, and managed the city very well. We had good and friendly contact.

When I told people that I was only the Baron's delegate, I was very careful always to represent both sides; meaning the Jewish community abroad and the group that needed the money to use it in the best way. I learned how you can be good, correct, and efficient, or how people can also be dishonest, when representing large groups abroad, and how they could use it for private favors. I must say I am happy to stress that everybody with whom I was in contact in the Jewish Agency, in the government of the cities and the communities, was very honest and very dedicated the whole time I was involved. Later on, I don't know, I left it in 1988 when I went to be the delegate of the Keren Hayesod in Germany, but during these five years, the Project was really well used and well developed. We built community centers, sports centers, old age centers, as well as some libraries. A Canadian couple, Jo Ayn and his wife, built a wonderful library in Dimona in a lovely center. Jo Ayn was the Chairman of the central committee for Project Renewal at Keren Hayesod. Before I left for Germany, he organized a nice farewell meeting and gave me a "drink flask" saying I will need it in Germany.



*Yaron, myself and Eli Alaluf,
Director of Project Renewal for the south*



*Ceremony to honor Project of Jacqueline Mause
with Shlomo Hillel, Chairman of KH and Israel
Goranik, Director General of Ort*



*Addressing an inauguration in Shderot –
Project of Italy by Mr. Gitis.*



*Ariel Center in Beer Sheva in memory of Ariel
Rubenzadeh – with Nava and Daniel*

PROJECT RENEWAL

The whole activity was new, and I enjoyed it immensely. It also brought me into contact with normal working Israelis, often quite modest Israelis living in Kiryat Shmona, Rosh Hanikra, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Nahariya, Dimona, Yerucham, or in Eilat. I enjoyed meeting people in all these places and being in contact with the mayors of all these cities. I was also in direct contact with Teddy Kollek, an Israeli personality in Jerusalem and sat next to Shimon Peres at a special event, where I also had to introduce him together with Maurice Hatchuel from Spain. I had good and close contact with Mayors of many of the cities where we had projects. Elyahu Nawi (Beersheba), Teddy Kollek (Jerusalem), Ely Halali (Dimona), Amir Peretz (Sderot). It was the same in Yerucham and Eilat.

We held special events, such as the one in Beersheba, where we put together a synagogue and a community center. Keren Hayesod didn't build synagogues, but there was one inside the community center. Our guest of honor was Dr. Joseph Burg, who was already a good acquaintance of mine, and it was wonderful to have the pleasure, once again, of exchanging some jokes with him. One occasion that I always remember is when I needed him urgently and he left a Government meeting to talk with me on the phone. Suddenly he asked if maybe I could find a Jewish community ready to adopt the Israeli Government? Before I had time to reply he added: "Don't worry – even CHELM would not accept it!!!" This was in 1985. In Jewish folklore, the city of Chelm was considered the city of fools.

When I began working for Project Renewal after we returned from Argentina, I was the Director, and I surprised the Keren Hayesod management in the way I organized the financial side and controlled the project. We put out a special booklet describing the projects to sell these ideas abroad, as sometimes individual people took it upon themselves to sponsor a project.

When we were in Argentina, we were very good friends with a couple, Nava and Daniel Reuben Zadeh. Nava was also very active in Keren Hayesod Women Division. They had one son, called Ariel, a very nice young boy who was around 16 or 17 when we first knew him. He had problems with chemistry at school, and so I said to Nava, "I believe that Carmela can help him. Carmela is a chemist, and she knows the subject." So, Ariel came to our house for a few lessons and said,

“It’s unbelievable. Carmela explained it all to me, and I understood it perfectly. I have the impression that the teacher didn’t explain it very well.” He got a fantastic result in his exams and obviously, Daniel and Nava were very happy.

Unfortunately, a terrible tragedy happened to them. Daniel, the father, liked to ride, and he bought a very nice new horse for his son so that they could go riding together. One day they returned to the club in the rain, and Daniel stopped at the entrance to speak to someone, and Ariel, sat on his horse waiting. Nobody saw that an electric line had fallen and was lying there in a puddle. The horse went near, put his feet into the puddle, and got an electric shock and started running around, WILD, completely crazy, and threw the young boy Ariel against a tree. He died on the spot, and the horse jumped over a wall onto the highway and was killed by a bus. Losing their only son was a terrible, huge tragedy, and of course, we were all extremely sad. We are still good friends with them, and luckily, they went on to have a daughter. She is a fantastic girl. They all live in Buenos Aires. While I was directing Project Renewal, we suggested to Nava and Daniel that they dedicate a project in Beersheba in the name of their son. They agreed, and there is now an important youth center in Beersheba Gimmel, called the Ariel Center for Science Education in memory of their son.

When I became responsible for Project Renewal in 1983, there were three departments; Project Renewal, Special Projects, and Wills and Bequests. The Director of all three of them was my friend, Shalom Dror, who was the one who brought me to Keren Hayesod in the first place. When Shalom decided to retire, he suggested, and the management agreed, that I take over the three departments. I confess that the main center of my activities was always Renewal, but now I was in charge of the other two departments as well. I had a very good team and I don’t want to offend anybody, because I don’t always remember everything, but I do remember Levana, Anette, Moshe Greenspan, Rachel Shitrit, Shlomo Pollack, another Rachel, Carmela (not my wife), Etty Nagari and obviously my contact with the National Director of Project Renewal, Gideon Vitkon, his assistant and later his replacement Ronit, and the representative of the Jewish Agency for all projects in the South of the country, Eli Alaluf. Eli and I are still good friends. Eli had a very successful and rich career. After the Jewish Agency, he became a delegate of Keren Hayesod in French Switzerland. On his return he directed the important Foundation of the Levy family, Keren

Rashi. After he left, he was elected to the Knesset and chaired a committee for human needs. I believe that at a certain point he became disappointed with our parliament, retired, and now lives in Beersheba.

Considering that today (2023), people make a big noise about the problems of Mizrachim and Ashkenazim, I want to state that we NEVER had any similar problem. We worked together Ashkenazi, Mizrachi etc... Today most of the arguments are for political use.

Now, something else happened, which was important for my position in KH. The Director of the finance division, Motke Meron — a close colleague and a very serious and respected person in Keren Hayesod hierarchy came to see me and said, “You should fight for your three departments to become one division, similar to the financial unit.” That was the only large division in Keren Hayesod and went under the name *agaf*. After some time, we succeeded in convincing the Director-General, Yacov Gilead, that my three departments should become one division, which gave me a position of number two — together with Meron — in the whole Keren Hayesod hierarchy.

Those five years were so interesting and varied, and I came into contact with so many people at all levels. It gave me a very special and good feeling and became one of the most enriching and unusual periods in my career.

It is important to mention a nice and special family event — Yaron’s barmitzvah. It was in 1987, one year before we left for Germany. One regret I have was the unfair Jewish tradition at that time that there were no Barmitzvah for the girls and we had no special event for Iris during our stay in Argentina. Yaron’s Barmitzvah was at a very nice synagogue near our house, and it just happened that the Israeli President at that time, Chaim Hertzog was also a member of the synagogue. So, at a certain moment being called to read the Torah, on the pulpit was Yaron Drucker, Jochanan Drucker, Gavriel Satchi (Carmela’s father) and President Herzog. How unfair that we couldn’t take photos on Shabbat.

Yaron presented very nicely and the next week we held two receptions in our garden. We couldn’t only have one as there were too many guests; family members, our friends, Yaron’s friends, colleagues from Carmela’s work (ORT) and colleagues from my work. The Director of Ort, Goralnik came, and my

Director Gilad sent special greetings from abroad. We hired very good caterers and hosted about 70-80 guests on each evening. It was a very happy event for all of us.

Sometime in 1988, the Director of Keren Hayesod came to me and said, “Jochanan, you speak good German. We have a problem. The German campaign is not doing very well. We would like you to go and be our director delegate in Germany.” Well, this was quite a shock and also a surprise, and even though I had been very happy with what I was doing, a change can sometimes be good. After all my activities in Keren Hayesod, in Brazil, Argentina, back to Israel with Project Renewal, I was suddenly asked to go to Germany to be Director of a big campaign.

There were three delegates in Germany located in Frankfurt, Berlin, and Munich with each responsible for a certain area. The Frankfurt delegate was also the Director of the whole campaign and boss of the two other delegates. It was an agreeable surprise — but a shock at the same time. I did not feel completely comfortable about living in Germany. This was in 1988, almost 50 years since the war began and barely 40 years since it ended. It was a disagreeable feeling for me, but I went home and spoke to Carmela about it. After a few days, I went back to Keren Hayesod and said, “Look, I am ready to make a trial and travel with Carmela for ten days to Frankfurt, as a tourist, not to have contact with the Jewish community. I just want to try being there and see how we feel. Keren Hayesod agreed — they really wanted me to accept the position.

In Germany, as tourists, we rented a car, did a little sightseeing outside the city, and in the evenings looked for some concerts and nice restaurants. I wanted to see how it felt to sit with German people, knowing their fathers or brothers or they themselves had been involved in the murder of six million Jews, including my two grandmothers and the rest of my family. So, I must admit, it was not very normal. When I saw or heard a train, I remembered what we knew about the trains in the past. When I looked at a factory and saw a big chimney, I had the feeling I was looking at a crematorium. It was not a pleasant feeling.

We were there for ten days, and towards the end, we had a small adventure. I parked the car, by mistake, in the wrong place, and when we came back, it was gone. The Germans are very efficient, and so half an hour of illegal parking and

**Invitation to Yaron's
Barmitzvah**

Carmela and Jochanan
Dekel (Drucker)
cordially invite you to the
celebration of the
Bar-Mitzvah
of their son
Yaron
which will take place at home,
11, Shevit Hapilita St.,
Herzlia Pituach,
on Tuesday, September 8,
1987 at 19.30.
"Aliya L'Torah on Shabat (5.9.1987)
"Parashat "Ki Tetse"
at "Eish Moshe" Synagogue,
Herzlia Pituach



Yaron and friends at his Barmitzvah



Iris dancing at the Barmitzvah



**Michal Moda'i - World President of WIZO and wife of Finance Minister,
Yitzhak Moda'i, giving me a special distinction**

the car was taken away. We had to go to a center, everybody was okay there, and we paid the fine. Everybody we met behaved correctly, and I must say they were well-educated and kind. We stayed in a hotel owned by a Jew. I met him, and we talked about the community and life there. When we came back, we discussed it again, but there was also a family problem, as our daughter Iris, was going into the Army the following month. If we agreed to go, we would go without our daughter and just take our son Yaron, who was 14.

Economically it was a good offer, as apart from the salary we would be able to rent our house out again and get a good income. In the end, we decided to accept the offer. Once again Carmela was outstanding. She was going to leave her job, leave her daughter and go to a country where she didn't know the language.

As always with Keren Hayesod, they wanted it straight away. I had to explain that we could go only in October in order to be here for the first three months of our daughter's Army service. We were going to rent our house out, so had to find a good place for Iris. We rented half an apartment in Ra'anana with a partner, and it worked very well. Carmela explained to ORT that her husband was going on an official mission abroad. When she gave in her notice, they were very good to her. They agreed that she could leave as it wasn't just leaving for fun and told her that when she comes back to Israel, they want her to come back and work for ORT, and that's what happened. When we came back after four years, Carmela was immediately re-instated into Ort. After Iris's first three months in the Army, we could see that she was doing well and had become integrated. In October 1988, Carmela, Yaron and I left for Frankfurt.

The chairman of Keren Hayesod was a very special person, called Ignatz Bubis. I was lucky. That's the best way to say it. In Brazil, I was not lucky with the chairman of Keren Hayesod. We did not have a good relationship, and in Argentina with Tito Sasson, I was extremely lucky. He was more than a chairman as he became a good friend. Bubis and I didn't really become friends, but I know he respected my work. It just so happened that the person who I replaced was not very well accepted. Something went wrong, and he was not respected as he should have been. Bubis learned that everything I did, was done seriously and efficiently, and we had a good relationship. It was important for him to be able to trust me. Bubis was a brilliant person, intelligent, cultivated,

worldly, and a good speaker. There was a German party, who wanted him to be a candidate for President, but he told them very clearly, "The whole time that there is one single survivor of the Holocaust, or Germans who were alive and active in that period, a Jew cannot be President of Germany. It's impossible." At the age of 13, Bubis was sent to a camp with his parents and sister, and at the age of 18, I think, he left the camp alone in the world. Everybody in his family had been killed. He was intelligent and resourceful and by dealing in diamonds and real estate he became rich and respected.

I learned a lot with Bubis. We had long conversations, and he told me some interesting stories. He said, "When I left the camp, it was clear to me that I never wanted to go back to Germany. But when we left the camp, we wanted to go East, but the American soldiers told us, "Don't go East. It's dangerous, and they dislike you." East meant back to Poland or in the direction of Russia. So, he said, "Well, we went West, and suddenly I was back in Germany. I planned to go to Canada or America, but life got in the way. I was still holding my suitcase. Then I began a business and got married. Then I enlarged my business, and we had a nice apartment. So, at that time I was not holding my suitcase anymore. The suitcase was holding me. I am successful and used to living here. So, that's why I am still in Germany." When Bubis died in 1999, he was buried in Israel. He had clearly asked for it as he felt that in Germany anti-Semites would damage his grave. It was a sad ceremony that I attended. He was an important public personality.

My contact at that time with the community was not only Bubis, but with a lot of people; most of them Holocaust survivors. People who had passed through the Holocaust and originally had no intention of living in Germany but somehow stayed there. There were also Jews who came from other parts of the world, including Israel. The community then was completely different from how it is today. At that time, the community was about 35,000, whereas today it is probably more than 150,000, due to the big immigration of Russians Jews to Germany, Israelis who came and also some Jews from other places.

We were looking for a house, and I remember a funny incident that happened when our daughter had a two-week vacation from the Army and came to visit us. We were in the car and looking for the right way to go when suddenly I said

that I didn't see the name of the street. So, Iris, who was 18 and very smart, said, "I know, Daddy. The name is Einbahn Strasse." Einbahn means one way only. She didn't know German and just saw the word Einbahn, and thought it was the name of the street.

We had another funny incident with Iris during that visit when we went to a big shopping center, and she wanted to go to the bathroom in one of the stores. So, she went to a lady and said, "please, where is the WC?" The lady said, "We don't have that material." So, Iris said, "You don't have a WC? A bathroom?" So, the lady said, "No, we don't have that." Iris came to tell me that there was no bathroom." So, I went up to her and said, "You don't have a toilet?" "Ah sure, the toilet is over there." A funny misunderstanding of languages.

Eventually, we found a nice apartment which was not far from the community center, but in the middle of the city, and I began to work very intensely. In the beginning, the two colleagues from Berlin and Munich were not very happy to have a new boss. The previous delegate in Frankfurt didn't pay too much attention to what happened, but I took it all seriously, and they were not always very cooperative. It ended up that it was all right to not have a relationship with one of them, but I became good friends with the other one, Arik Ravon, and have remained so until today.





*The reception at
Carmela's parents
fiftieth wedding
anniversary*



*Gavriel's 80th birthday
with family*



Gavriel and Rachel dancing

Time you enjoy wasting
was not wasted.

John Lennon

Germany, Work, Travel, Friends

Frankfurt in 1988 was a very different place compared to how it is today. There were very few immigrants, and the central train station was easy to use and free of any down-and-outs. Last time I visited (around 2010), this place was very bad. Human bodies lying around on the ground, narcotics etc...

During the four years we lived there we went to many cultural events including the theater, (although it wasn't easy because of the language), but we enjoyed movies, operas, and concerts. Being in the middle of Europe, we took many holidays — sometimes with Yaron and Iris, including a nice visit to England. We also had three wonderful trips to Italy and visited Paris and Spain. In Spain, the international Expo was on, and Yaron was enchanted by it. We stayed with our friends Efrat and Yossi who were working there for some years. We also went winter skiing in Saas Fee, a resort village in the Swiss Alps. It is a fantastic place, near Geneva, about 1800 meters high where cars aren't allowed.

Yaron eventually learned to ski quite well. He was 15 when he started, and at first, he didn't want to learn, as he was a little nervous. However, after the second lesson, he succeeded and began to enjoy it very much and went skiing later on in America. I learned to ski as a child in Poland, and as a boy of six or seven years old, I was very courageous and skied very well. If I stayed there, I would have carried on improving. Carmela didn't like it at all, and never learned to ski. We also organized a very nice trip for Yaron and Iris to visit America. They met my sister Marietta in Washington and had a fantastic time.

Friends from Israel and also some from Brazil came to Europe and used the occasion to visit us in Frankfurt and stayed with us.

Carmela's mother told us, "I will never come to Germany after what happened" although, Gavriel, Carmela's father did visit us and had an interesting trip with Yaron to Berlin. As Rachel wouldn't come to Frankfurt, we organized a vacation in Grindelwald, Switzerland. While we were there, very good friends of ours, Pola and Reuven Agassi came to stay as well, as we had an extra cottage which was not occupied but at our disposal. They came with their son, Tal, a very nice boy and a friend of Yaron. The only problem was that Tal hated cheese — even the smell of it. So, we always had to find a restaurant that didn't serve cheese — almost non-existent in Switzerland. Imagine life without Fondue...

Close friends, Yossi and Efrat Aroch, came to visit for a week, and something very interesting and positive happened during their stay. A friend of Efrat from Israel called to tell them about a very good opportunity to buy land in Ra'anana. We knew that Ra'anana was a very nice place and if we bought the land, we would be able to build a house there in the near future. At the time, the land was still agricultural, which meant we would make a very nice profit. Okay, they convinced me. They bought two pieces of land, and I bought one, and it is only very recently (2021) that the apartment was finished. I must say it was a very good investment and never mind that it took 30 years and not 6 months as they calculated. Today the area is known as Neve Zemer, and we have a lovely apartment on the first floor with a garden of 60 meters — all thanks to Yossi and Efrat who were our guests in Grindelwald.

In 1990 my sister Marietta came to visit. The previous year Gorbachev had practically finished with the Soviet Empire, and you could travel freely, so we decided, to go and visit Bielsko, our city in Poland. It was a very interesting visit, and something very special happened.

We went to see the house we lived in as children. It was a nice three-story building with a large garden around it. There were now a lot of small houses built on the land surrounding the house, but it was standing almost exactly as we had left it. We tried to understand what happened because other buildings looked very different. What happened was that when the Germans took Bielsko, the Gestapo decided that our house, as it stood alone, would be good for their center, and

stayed there. Not a very big honor, I must say, and better not to even think what happened there, but our property became a center for the Gestapo. When the German army left and the Poles came back, the Polish police said, “Well, if this house was good enough for the Gestapo, it probably is also good for us.” So, then we had Polish police in our house. We also found out that during all this time, and I am talking about from 1939 when we left, until 1990, (50 years), nobody had changed the name on the property register. That means that the Polish police were using our house, but it was still in our name. We checked the properties of other members of our family, but all names at the land registries had changed, as well as the street names. We couldn’t find one single property, except for our house – which still belonged to our family. We contracted a Polish lawyer to work for us. Frau Rosengarten was married to a Jew who returned to Poland after the war. We agreed that 20% of what we made from the sale of the property would be hers and 80% ours. I didn’t have any money to pay her upfront, so the risk was for both of us.

The lawyer did a fantastic job and told us that she had to be careful, as all the papers we had given her were originals. She didn’t want to leave them with any Polish official, and so every day, she took all the paperwork to court and back home again at the end of the day. She felt that if she left the papers there the Polish police would see to it that everything disappeared, and there would be no proof and we would lose the case. One document that was especially important was authorized by a Brazilian Notary and the Polish Consulate in São Paulo. It took about six or seven years for everything to go through, but eventually the house was ours and we were able to sell it for a good price.

I must say the Polish justice system at that time and the judge, were very fair and honest. Not only did we receive the right to repossess our house, but we also were awarded rent money for the years that the Polish police used it. From 1945 to 1989 it was a Communist regime, but from 1989, until the case was finished, it was another six years, until the Polish police had to leave, and so we received money for those years.

Returning to my professional activity; the first big occasion for work after I arrived in 1988 was at the beginning of November to commemorate 50 years since Kristallnacht (named because of the amount of broken glass). The event in Frankfurt lasted for three days, beginning with a ceremony held in the



*Shimon Peres
visiting Frankfurt*



*Frankfurt – special
event in the presence
of Israel Ambassador,
Benny Navon, Shlomo
Hillel and Iguaz Bubis.*



*Iris receiving her
rank of Lieutenant
with Nurit, Erica
and grandparents*

Frankfurt synagogue. It was attended by the German Minister of Education, the German Finance Minister and the Minister-President of Hessen, which was the area of Frankfurt. The chancellor, Helmut Kohl, was not invited. There was some bad feeling between him and the Jewish community, and it was known that if he came there would be anti-Kohl demonstrations. It was held in Frankfurt as Berlin was still divided, and the formal capital, Bonn, had a very small Jewish community. The largest Jewish community at that time, probably not more than 7,000 Jews, lived in Frankfurt, while there were about 30,000 Jews in the whole country. The majority of them were Holocaust survivors, called *She'erit Ha'plita*, which by the way is the name of our street in Herzliya where we live. Today (2021) there are more than 100,000 Jews living in Germany. It was an impressive ceremony, with all the Ministers speaking, as well as Bubis, my chairman, and the Israeli Ambassador Benjamin Navon. Each one of the German Ministers stressed that they wanted to thank the Jews who agreed to live in Germany and have the confidence to do so. It was a very special feeling to hear these quite important people, one after the other saying "We thank you for your confidence. We appreciate that you are living with us, and we promise to take care of you." It was quite remarkable.

Just to add a little bit of history, in 1938, the Nazi's in the German government were already very strong, and on the night of the Pogrom of November 9th, 1938, they tried to prove that they could do whatever they wanted with the Jews, and the world wouldn't care. On *Kristallnacht*, Nazi and German groups went around, breaking windows in Jewish shops, burning some down and also setting fire to most of the synagogues in Germany. Many Jews were also killed, and several others committed suicide that night, because they understood what was happening. The next day it was all reported in the newspapers, but nothing happened. The whole world just said "Okay, that's an internal German issue. If they are burning and killing Jews, that's not our problem."

The day after the event at the Synagogue there was also a very big event at the central square at the Römer. On this occasion one of the speakers was a newspaperman, and he was so clear saying "It's an illusion to say that only the Nazi's were to blame." He said that he had all kinds of photos that soldiers took showing the killing of Jews in a lot of places. He showed post cards sent by soldiers to their girlfriends with horrible photos. To say that nobody in Germany knew

what was happening is a monstrous lie. Ignatz Bubis also spoke at the Römer in the name of the Jewish community. It is a pity I cannot include a video of his speech because he almost cried. He was remarkable and the people were impressed. A large part of the Jewish community attended, but the majority of the audience were residents from Frankfurt and the surrounding area.

Regarding my activities: During my time there I re-organized the whole Keren Hayesod system in Frankfurt. I began a much more inclusive relationship with the Jewish community in the city, not just with the richer groups but with everybody. I organized the opening of the campaign for 1989 and was very thankful to Bubis, who helped me to take out the old chairman, Buksenspanner. He was not efficient, and the campaign was very low. We appointed a new young member as President of the campaign in Frankfurt, Sasha Tessler, and at the opening he immediately said, "I'm going to double my donation now." From that moment on everyone at the reception, mostly doubled or tripled their donation. This changed the face of the campaign.

Then destiny interfered in a good way or a bad way, depending on how you look at it. First in a fantastic way when Gorbachev and Russia decided to let 'my people go' and allow Russian Jews to emigrate to Israel. We know that a large number of Jews in Russia wanted to go to America. Maybe some of them thought "Okay, we will go to Israel, and then we will go to America," but they stayed in Israel. In one year suddenly over 100,000 Jews arrived in Israel. This was a kind of a miracle, as immigration to Israel at that time was a few hundred per year. Suddenly some 120,000 people arrived in one year.

It was not easy for the Israeli economy, but the government immediately decided to absorb every one of them. For me it changed the aspect of the campaign because I had another reason to approach people and the campaign income increased significantly. Our donors understood the need to help Israel with this enormous absorption. After some years, there was another huge immigration to Israel of one million Russian Jews. It is important to state that this was a big blessing for our country.

The following year, 1991, another thing happened, but this time not a good one. Saddam Hussein started the Gulf War, and although Israel was not part of it, he sent Scud missiles — a kind of bomb, which reached Ramat Gan, Tel Aviv and

surrounding areas. Saddam Hussein's attacks on Israel made our contributors understand that the help needed was now greater and our contributions increased. We also reached out to the German population in general, that is non-Jews. We published adverts in the newspapers, and it is very interesting that we received quite a lot of contributions from non-Jews. I cannot say that they were monetary very big contributions, but there were quite a lot of them. Later on, when I checked with my secretary, we saw that 99% of these contributions came from Protestants. We received almost nothing from the Catholic community, probably because from childhood they were taught not to like Jews.

Looking back – what was my part in all this? The answer is to change the local leadership putting it in young and competent hands; knowing how to use the Russian Jewish immigration; showing the danger of Saddam Hussein; creating a strong personal relationship with the community, especially its leaders and main donors. All this changed the income of the campaign to six or seven times more than before. All this activity was not only around the Frankfurt region, but all of Germany. Now my two colleagues from Berlin and Munich worked with me as a team. I must say we did do a very good job and the Head Office looked at me with respect. The period of the war with Saddam Hussein was difficult for Carmela and me as Iris was in Israel and we were aware of the danger that everybody was in.

In 1992, after four years in Germany, the Head Office in Jerusalem was pressing me to stay longer. The new Chairman for the Campaign in Germany, Sruel Prais and Sacha Tessler, Chairman for Frankfurt, asked me to stay on but I wanted to leave. As I had always said I didn't want to be away from Israel for more than four years. I didn't want us to create new roots... I just wanted to go home. Once again, I was lucky; the serious and good work made Bubis trust me, and I also had a very good relationship with Sruel Prais. He helped me to overcome the permanent critic and animosity of Armand Buksenspanner (ex-Chairman in Frankfurt who I succeeded in removing) and actual treasurer of the Campaign. Buksi never forgave me for being successful.

So, around August 1992, we returned to Israel. Sasha Tessler made a very nice farewell party at his very elegant house in Frankfurt. The Israeli Ambassador in Bonn, Benjamin Navon, with whom I had a very good relationship came especially for this occasion. The Embassy at that time was in Bonn because

Berlin was still divided. I went to Bonn many times for meetings or for special international matters and especially for matters related to the campaign.

During those four years, Iris, our daughter finished the Army as a lieutenant, and then went to study law. Actually, when we came back, she was in the middle of her law studies. Later she attended the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to obtain her Master's degree in Law. We regret that we missed the Army ceremony when she graduated as a Lieutenant, as we could not travel at that time. The only consolation was to know that Carmela's parents, sister and brother were all there, as well as some of our good friends.

Yaron, during the period we were in Germany, 1988 till 1992, studied at the International American school in Bad Homburg – the beginning of his romance with America. The school was mainly for children of the Diplomatic Corp. Yaron had already developed an affinity towards America when he was there with Iris, and then after he studied in an American school for four years in Frankfurt his feelings towards America increased. After his Army service finished (he left after five years as a Major) he went with a friend (Eyal) for a six-month excursion to Canada and the USA. Most of his colleagues went to Asia or South America, but it was only America for him.

I also have a wife, and as always, everything with Carmela was much more than normal. When we arrived in Germany, Carmela didn't speak any German, so she went to the Goethe Institute to learn the language. The courses were always a month long and then they moved everyone up a class. After the first month they told her to jump one month and go straight into the third class. After she finished the third class, the Director of the Institute gave her a bonus, saying "Now you can skip another class, go to the fifth month and as you are so good, you are our guest. It's on our account." Basically, it was a scholarship, and after four months, Carmela was able to speak relatively good German. It is a very difficult and serious language, with absolutely horrible grammar. It's not easy to learn, but Carmela mastered it quite quickly. No surprise!

She then started to look around for opportunities and connected with the very famous and well-known Max Planck International Institute. Carmela had very good recommendations from The Aviv University and when she approached them, she was accepted as a guest scientist. For the next 3½ years Carmela



Bielsko – Marietta and I visit our house, 1990. See page 10.



Bielsko Cemetery – Stone set by Marietta and Jochanan in memory of our grandfather Karol Drucker, who died before the war and before the rest of the family were murdered by the Nazis

worked in research at the Max Planck Institute in Biotechnology with two close colleagues who were very impressed with her. She had a very good and interesting time there, including a scholarship.

The problem was though that during the Gulf War her colleagues would often come to her shocked to hear that Tel Aviv or Ramat Gan had been bombed. It wasn't easy for Carmela as she had the thought of our daughter in her head the whole time. I knew via the Embassy when an alarm sounded so I was able to call Carmela to speak about something unimportant to avoid her checking the news or radio. After the attack was over and I checked that Iris was all right, I told Carmela what had happened.

One day Professor Koepsel (Carmela's mentor and Director of the Institute) told her that they were expecting a Jewish Russian scientist refugee and asked her to take care of him and help him adapt. My wife obviously accepted and helped Valentin very much when he arrived. We invited him and his wife, Aida for one of our holidays and were shocked how little (really nothing) he knew about Judaism. He told us that he remembered his grandmother coming to a special dinner and bringing some different bread. Obviously, it was matzot — but he had no idea what it was all about, as all religion was prohibited by the Communist Regime. Our friendship with Valentin went on for a long time.

I want to talk about what happened in our house in Herzliya while we were away. The first tenant was a Belgian millionaire who came with a very nice Jaguar car and his girlfriend — an Israeli lady, called Miriam. She was very religious and as it happened, we had a divided sink in our kitchen, so it was easy to keep kosher. They took our house, and signed the contract, but since they were not married, I asked them both to sign it, which they did. After we had been in Germany for some months, a neighbor of ours, our good friend Judy Golan phoned and said, "Some very strange things happen in your house. The police came and arrested the man, then the wife changed all the locks in the house. After some days, the police released him, but she left the house. He then changed the locks again. He left after a few days, she came back and again changed the locks."

I found out that the police arrested him for having forged money. He used to go once every three months to Jerusalem, stay in a very nice hotel, and change fake

US dollars into Israeli shekels. At a certain point, the police discovered what he was doing. When I found out about this, I still had some dollars from him, so I called him to ask what was happening. He thought that I was speaking about the problems he had with Miriam, who by then he had married. I said, “No, I am worried about the money I have. Is it fake?” He said to me, “No no, Mr. Dekel, don’t worry. That money is not fake.” Funny — as he was confirming that he did deal in fake money

Anyway, he disappeared one day, and later on, I spoke with his wife, (by then their marriage had been annulled) and she told me, “The police arrested him, because he was dealing with fake money.” She thought he was a Belgian millionaire, when in fact he was French. He was arrested in France under suspicion of murdering his first wife. They couldn’t prove it however, because she had died in mysterious circumstances, but he did receive a very big insurance payment, and arrived in Israel with a super elegant Jaguar car which, we discovered later, was stolen. He lived in my house, and while he paid most of the expenses, Miriam paid the rest, so, financially, I did not lose anything. His wife became suspicious and saw that he had booked a trip to the Kinneret for a vacation but had reserved only a place for the two of them. He had promised a vacation with her children, but he ‘forgot’ to make reservations for them. Some months before he had taken out a special insurance for them both and also a ‘small’ insurance for her in his favor in case of death. So, she suspected that he was also going to eliminate her on Lake Kinneret and collect on another insurance policy. Okay — it was very strange; I had a Belgian tenant, millionaire, who was not Belgian but French, who was not a millionaire but a thief, and maybe a murderer too.

I had to rent out my house again and this time the Russians took it for a Consul and his family who were supposed to arrive from Russia. However, something happened, and they didn’t arrive. Maybe somebody did not want him to come and broke his leg in Russia — we never found out. Then the Russian embassy asked me if three people from the Embassy could live in my house for a certain time. I agreed, and two men and one woman moved in. After a while, Judy Golan and other neighbors told us, that the house was always completely closed, and they never even opened the shutters. She also told us that everybody was afraid of the woman who looked much more dangerous than the two men put together.

After one year I went to meet the Russian Ambassador, Martirozof, and we agreed to cancel the contract. The three Russian tenants left immediately.

This happened during an international meeting of Keren Hayesod in Israel which I came to attend. First it was a pleasure for me to be with Iris. Secondly, I checked my house and I saw that there were somethings that had hardly been used. The bathroom downstairs had never been used and I had to change all the faucets, because they had become stuck shut. I could see that they also hardly used the kitchen. The whole thing was very strange, but they had left. I still do not know exactly what happened in our house.

The next person to take the house was a French diplomat, Daniel Burrett. He seemed very nice and agreeable, and he lived there for just over a year but disappeared two months before the end of the contract without paying for them. In addition, he caused some damage in the house and just left the garden to die as he was too mean to water it. Even so I cannot say that I lost out on the whole business. This French diplomat was transferred to Poland, and I just hoped that he got completely frozen there. I could not make a legal case, because it was too complicated, as I would have to process the case in Paris and not in Israel.

When we came back from Germany, Yaron, who was 18 by then, went straight into the army. Iris was studying law and Carmela was immediately accepted back into Ort and was asked to manage a new and important institution and I went back to Keren Hayesod. It was 1992, I was 61, but not ready to retire yet. They explained to me at Keren Hayesod that the division I had managed was not the same anymore and so I couldn't go back. Instead, I was asked to become involved in a special project, under the Director General, dealing with Wills and Testaments, mainly in South America, but also in some European countries, such as Spain, Portugal and France.

We were back in Israel, and I started on another new phase in my working life, which involved a great deal of traveling, meeting new and interesting people and once again with a positive and important emphasis on benefiting Israel.



The only place that *success* comes before *work* is in the dictionary.

Vidal Sassoon

Wills and Bequests

Many times, in Keren Hayesod — during the years 1980 to 2010, I really thought how strange: “I am involved in a fantastic activity and in addition I am being paid for it.” I felt this even more during the period I traveled for Wills and Bequests. In many senses some of the delegates of Keren Hayesod, both abroad and in Israel, regarded our institution as a family. Regretfully, I have the feeling that is not so any more...

My new position meant that I traveled abroad a lot, mostly to Spain and Brazil, but also to Portugal, Argentina, Colombia, Venezuela, and Bolivia. In all these places, I was looking for the possibility of receiving legacies, obviously from Jews for Israel, but sometimes I dealt with non-Jews as well. Today, I can say that I had some excellent results, especially from Spain and Brazil, where I went very often — possibly even up to 20 times.

I had excellent results in Brazil, which still exist today and managed to secure a small Will in Bolivia. My visits to Colombia, Venezuela, and France were to prepare other people in Keren Hayesod, to carry out the work. In Argentina, I created an excellent situation, which provided results after I stopped traveling. The thing with Wills is that it takes time and can go on for many years. In the beginning, a person thinks it over, analyzes it, and eventually decides to do it — even if it’s five years later. It’s important to maintain contact with the person, in order to get results. I had to get to know the people I met quite well and enter into their lives to understand them. It was also essential to

gain their confidence. You have to be near and to have a friendly human approach to convince them that this is a good idea and that they would like to leave some of their fortune to Israel and Keren Hayesod.

I have a couple of short stories about this period. In Brazil, obviously the main place was São Paulo, but I also traveled around the country. One small place I went to in the South of the country was called Erechim. In the early days, it was an agricultural area where Baron Hirsh (from as early as 1891) brought Jews to escape from antisemitism in Europe and return to work on the land. With time the city developed, and some industry appeared there as well. Today there is still a nice, small Jewish Community living in Erechim. I met two lovely ladies who owned a large shop in the center of town. They told me their brother was a lawyer and had lived in Porto Alegre, but sadly he had died, and now they had to take care of the business on their own. They had never married, and there were no children or other relatives. I invited them to come to Israel, but they were very suspicious of everything. It took me two or three visits over three years of talking before the younger sister agreed to come to Israel. Sadly, by then her older sister had passed away. We became quite close, my wife spent time with her and took her shopping, and she finally understood how serious we were and how positive everything was that we told her. Eventually, she told me “I will think it over,” but she never said “Yes.” I left with her a clear document of what she could do, and to my agreeable surprise, although I was sad that she had passed away, I discovered that she left most of her assets to Israel — Keren Hayesod. In addition to her shop, there was land, money, and possessions. I think that from the day I first met her until Israel received her bequest, more than ten years passed.

I have another completely different and very interesting story. I was in Alicante in Spain, in contact with a candidate, but nothing came out of it. One day this person asked me, “Jochanan, did you speak with Jack?” I asked him who Jack was and he told me, “Jack Cohen. He lives in Alicante. You have to be in contact with him.” I phoned Jack and started talking to him and he asked me where I was. I told him the name of the hotel, and he said, “Okay, tomorrow at 10 a.m. I will come with my wife to talk to you.” The next day an English couple arrived — a very nice friendly Jewish couple — Jack and Margaret Cohen. We sat and I offered them coffee, but being English, Margaret asked for tea. To join her, I



*Carmela
speaking
at an ORT
Singalowsky
event*



*Carmela's parents and Iris
at ORT Singalowsky event*



*May 2021 – Ceremony
in honor of Carmela*



*Public event
honoring Carmela*

also asked for tea, although I don't usually drink it. Jack asked for a Brandy. During our hour-long conversation, I think he finished at least three glasses of Brandy. He was very responsive and when I explained what I do, he said, "We are idiots. Why didn't we think about this before? We don't have any children, and we haven't thought about what will happen one day with everything we have. It would remain here, and maybe the municipality will use it for something – who knows? I want to do it, Jochanan, this afternoon. Bring a lawyer, and we will do it." It was the only time that somebody agreed and signed practically on the same day. We met the lawyer the following day, and Jack and Margaret signed a whole bequest for Israel.

Whenever I was in Alicante, they came to see me at the hotel. We drank tea and Brandy and, on a couple of occasions, had dinner together. After Jack passed away, Margaret asked me to come to her house to show me the secret place where she always kept a little money in order not to have to go to the bank. Later, when Margaret passed away, Keren Hayesod sold the apartment and also received a small fortune that was in the bank.

I traveled to São Paulo about three times a year for about two or three weeks. Many times, when I was there, somebody would tell me that a certain person, who I didn't know, passed away and left quite a fortune to Keren Hayesod. Although I wasn't at all involved in making the Will, I received acknowledgement for it. It also gave prestige to the young lawyer Nilton Serson, with whom I had become friendly. I asked him to become Chairman of the Wills and Bequests Project and he agreed, which brought him more prestige. The following year, Nilton Serson became Chairman of the whole campaign in São Paulo. He was a good and efficient Chairman as well as quite a good donor. We had a very good relationship, and I am telling this now because life can be strange. I cannot put here all the details of Nilton Serson's life, but after he retired and was not active anymore, he suddenly became a different person. Apparently, it can happen. We have very little contact, but I am still surprised that you think you know somebody, but then discover that you really don't know that person at all. I worked with Nilton a lot, and he was always very positive. I liked him a lot.

Now I want to talk about the largest Will and also the special friendship Carmela and I made with Livia and George Bleier. I had a strange experience

in Brazil with a friend of my father who was 90 years old. I went to talk to him about making a Will, but he did not understand what I was saying. I think his head was not working too well, but when I left, he called a friend of his, a much younger man, called George, and said: "George, I just had a visit from somebody from Israel, who knows how to receive reparations from Poland." We had not spoken about reparations from Poland at all, and I certainly did not know a lot about the subject. I had learned a bit about it when I succeeded in getting our house back in Poland and selling it, but nothing more.

Anyhow, George called me and invited me to his office. It was a simple and modest office, but later on, I discovered that George was a very wealthy man. He hated to show off and did not like to attract attention. I promised George that I would check in Israel about reparations from Poland. On my next trip, I looked into the matter with the highest authorities in Jerusalem, and I understood that nobody knew exactly how to go about it, which is still true today, 27 years later.

I visited him again the next time I was in São Paulo. There was such good chemistry between us, and I invited him to come and visit Israel as soon as he could. He promised he would and when he did come to Israel, we traveled around the country together. We went to visit Nitzana, Jerusalem and the Hadassah Neirim Youth Village near Netanya. He made a small contribution there.

The next time I visited him in Brazil, I also met his wife. When I got back, the person who I reported to, by the way, a very efficient and serious person, said, "Look, you are meeting this guy and his wife, but nothing comes out of it. I think you should stop. It seems to be a waste of time." As I had experience with this kind of conversation, I did something very simple. I continued to meet George, but I did not report it, so nobody could complain. Eventually, George became a serious donor and a good friend. He was about ten years older than me, and he became a mentor in some matters, which I liked and respected very much. He and his wife were Holocaust survivors, they didn't have children, and did a lot to help disadvantaged people in Brazil.

On his next visit I took him to meet Carmela in her office on the ORT Singalovski Campus, in Tel Aviv. While we were talking, she received some fax messages and showed them to our guest. The faxes were from a large concern — Motorola — asking if some students could begin work there immediately. George was so



Livia Bleier and friend in Sao Paulo



Iguassu 2017: Livia, Zeze, Carmela and Jochanan



George Bleier



*Livia, Carmela, and
Bollag couple, Zurich
May 2015*

impressed that on the spot he donated money for a technological laboratory in a special learning unit in the school.

After some years and many visits there was an inauguration of one of their projects at the Hermelin College, (now called G.L.B. College). On stage, in front of many important guests and especially in front of the students and staff of the College, George told his life story, and how after he survived the concentration camps — Mauthausen and others — he went to Italy and stayed in a Jewish center in Milan. Somebody told him to go to the JOINT office and ask someone for help. He was embarrassed, but after one night sleeping under the stairs, he went to the office and asked for help. The person in there said, “But you don’t look Jewish.” So, he said a Bracha and the whole Shema Yisrael. They were impressed and gave him, among other things, some new underwear. It was the first time since he was in the camps that he had clean new underwear. When he put them on, he said, “I promise that if I am able, I will give it back to my people a hundred thousand times. He banged on the pulpit and said loudly: “AND TODAY IS THE DAY.” And you know what? His wife, my wife and a lot of people in the audience were crying.

After that first project, there were another two or three big ones, which helped ORT a lot. We became close friends with this couple, and sometimes we traveled together, which was very enjoyable. As life goes, he left us when he was 95. We are still in close contact with his wife who continues to take care of needy people, both in Brazil and Israel.

In 1996, after four years of working on this project, and at the age of 65, I decided that it was a good time for me to retire. When I told Moshe Gur, who had replaced me in my job as Director of the Special Projects Division, and was Director General of Keren Hayesod now, that I wanted to retire, he didn’t agree, saying they needed me. Eventually we agreed that I would continue on a part time basis. I wasn’t one of the staff any longer, but I continued to travel, mainly to Spain and Brazil. I also went to Portugal on three occasions, although there were no results and eventually, they stopped approaching the Jewish community there. I actually remained active in Keren Hayesod for another 12 years, until 2008 finding new Wills mainly in Brazil and Spain.

This was a great period for me, as I was traveling for Keren Hayesod, but I was not linked to work every day, so I could also enjoy some free time. On several

occasions after I finished all my meetings, Carmela joined me, and we enjoyed a wonderful holiday together. We were able to do this in Brazil, Argentina and several places in Europe. All in all, my activity in Keren Hayesod, semi-employed and semi-retired, allowed me to visit many places in the world that I would normally not have seen. I'm speaking about the whole of Southern Argentina, many places in Brazil, countries such as Bolivia, Colombia, Venezuela, and various cities in France and Spain.

After 1996 I was formally retired, so I was to travel whenever I wanted. Carmela and I visited Thailand, Poland, Manaus and America for longer periods, as for Yaron's wedding in California. We were in Switzerland (Vitznau) and Austria with George and Lia. I fell in love with Barcelona, and I still feel that it's the nicest place in Europe. Of course, there are many other wonderful cities, but Barcelona became a very special place for me.

Meanwhile, our children were carrying on with their lives. Iris finished the Army and was studying Law. Yaron completed his army service. He decided to become an officer and signed on for an extra year and then was asked to stay on for another six months. He left the army as a Major. After a six-month trip to the USA and Canada he went to study engineering in the ORT Braude Academic College of Engineering in Carmiel. Later he obtained his Master's degree from Baruch College, New York.

In 1997 – wow, our small girl is getting married. I must confess that Carmela and I were already confused by the number of admirers and suitors that Iris had from the age of 18 until 28. At the beginning it was clear that it would be Nissim, but suddenly our daughter decided – no. And then one morning during this special year, Iris and Omri were having breakfast with us and suddenly she said: "We are going to get married." Shock and silence! Happy shock and happy silence, but for Omri, and maybe Iris too, it was a different shock, because we did not react. They thought we did not approve, until the moment Carmela and I got up to give them both a big hug and congratulate them. To tell the truth, we were waiting for this announcement and did not understand why this young, and very nice man, was taking so long. One week later, Carmela and I went to Jerusalem to meet his parents. Yael and Professor Mordechi Shalit – Motke – a wonderful couple, warm, kind and understanding.

Iris and Omri
are getting married

on Tuesday, July 1st, 1997
at the "Achuza", Beit Chanan

Reception at 19:30
Chupa at 20:00

We will be honored to see you
among our guests

Carmela & Jochanan Yael & Mondechai
Dekel Shalit

Please confirm
Dekel 09-9550886 Shalit 02-5631706
Iris & Omri 02-6715221

Wedding invitation for Iris and Omri



Iris and Omri



Motke and Yael Shalit, the newlyweds, Carmela and Jochanan

WILLS AND BEQUESTS

As usual there were some financial agreements to discuss. Omri owned a small apartment in Jerusalem. Iris didn't. I explained that I can only participate with a part of its value, and I had barely finished the sentence when Motke immediately said, "Excellent." Some years later I made it at least even but always appreciated their nice characters.

It was a lovely ceremony in an orange orchard near Ness Ziona with about 300 guests.

They are such a wonderful couple, and today (2022), they have three children, Yara 23, Itai 21 and Yotam 17.

Carmela at that time was the Director of ORT's largest and most prestigious College, Singalovsky. Later on, she was asked to be in charge of ORT's Educational Academy, in Jerusalem which she did for two years.

When Carmela left Jerusalem, she became Head of Hermelin College in Netanya where she stayed for about eight years. It was nearer to home and an easier journey. In 2008, the college received the possibility of offering academic degrees if the Head was a professor. Carmela found and recruited Professor Gutfinger to work at the college and she became Deputy President of the Academic College, until the end of 2011. At that time, it was called College of Engineering ORT Hermelin, but today it is known as Campus G.L.B.

Carmela did a fantastic job there and was very much admired and respected. When she reached the age of 70 in September 2011, Carmela retired, and the College made her an absolutely incredible party. In all my years in Keren Hayesod I participated in a lot of "Farewell" parties for persons who were being honored, but I don't think I ever saw something like the one they threw for Carmela. She was shown such respect and admiration by everybody in the College as well as the presence of big donors who came especially from South America. Our good friend Livia was there, as well as the Mayor of Netanya, the General Director of ORT, the President of the Board, all the teachers, students and many others. We had our children and grandchildren there, as well as many friends and colleagues. It was absolutely outstanding.

My wife was unable to sit still after retiring, and very soon after, she started

CHAPTER 19

volunteering in WIZO and became the chairperson of the Education Division of World WIZO, carrying on for eight years, until quite recently.

By now I had stopped traveling for Keren Hayesod and began to enjoy life as a retired person. But by nature, I can never sit quietly so began to take more care of our finances and organize trips overseas with Carmela and also with the whole family.



Livia, George, Jochanan, Carolyn and Andre Bollag at the Bleier's home



Livia and George

Other things may change us,
but we start and end with the family.

Anthony Brandt

Our Pride and Joy

This section is devoted to the youngsters in our family. In 1980, we had two children and were planning to go to Argentina. We had hoped for a third baby, but it didn't happen. Our friend Judy took us to an orphanage in the WIZO center in Tel Aviv. We were both captivated by a young boy called Oded, and we brought him home for the weekend. It's very difficult to imagine what it's like in a place like that when all the other children put out their hands and say, "Take me too." It was quite painful. Anyhow, we took Oded home with us, but he didn't speak or laugh. He was like that for several weeks. Then suddenly, after about one month, we had a fantastic present. This small boy began to have all the normal reactions of a child his age. He smiled and ran around, and he was happy when he was in our house. We made a birthday party for his first anniversary, and it was wonderful for us to see how this boy reacted. He was so warm and full of emotion. However, we then received a painful shock when we were told that there was no chance of adopting him. They told us that we could carry on taking him home for weekends, and sometimes even longer, but obviously, we could not take him to Argentina. We couldn't adopt him because of a legal problem that a child can only be given up for adoption if abandoned by his parents. Sadly, Oded's mother saw her child as an object of value. Not of love, just value. She knew the law and made sure that every three weeks minus one day, she went to visit him for half an hour, signed the book, and left. By doing that, she was in contact with him, and therefore he wasn't abandoned. If we had wanted to go ahead, we would have had to go to court; it would have been a very complicated procedure and taken many years. It was sad for us, but we had to give up.



*Carmela and Friends
Falkland, 2017*



Carmela with cigar, Cuba, 2015



*Us, Yaron, Sarina and Marietta in Napa Valley,
at the place where Yaron proposed, 2014*



First family trip to Rio, 2002

I have a happier story. During the period that Carmela was Director at the Hermelin college for ORT, there was another ORT school in Netanya, where they received many youngsters through a program called Naale, run by the Jewish Agency. The idea was to bring Jewish youngsters, aged about 14, hoping that in the future, their parents would also come to Israel to give their children a better education and quality of life. They came from many different countries, and at the age of 18, these youngsters decided if they wanted to carry on living in Israel and go to the army or if they wanted to go back. Sometimes their parents came to live here and so they all stayed.

One of the teachers from this school said to Carmela that they are looking for families who can take care of one of the youngsters from Ukraine. We said "Yes, gladly," and a young boy called Nikita Morgunov, age 14, came to our house with a teacher. He looked around very suspiciously and didn't say anything. He stayed with us for the weekend, had dinner, barely talked, and then asked if he could go to his room. We said, of course, and he went to his room and closed the door. We didn't know what was happening, but later on, his teacher told us that it was so special for him to have his own space. He was in a room with three other children at school, and he was never alone. Suddenly when he came to our house, he was able to sit by himself in a room and be master of himself.

Nikita came to our house almost every weekend. I went to pick him up from school on Friday afternoon and took him back on Saturday night. It really worked. We created a very positive, friendly, and loving relationship with this boy. We had long talks about all kinds of things. Maybe I spoke more than he, but sometimes he also talked. Today he is 30 and married to Eden a lovely young woman. They have a three-year-old daughter called Lia and a baby Hili.

One of the nicest events in our life was, about four years ago, when he was getting married and asked Carmela and me to walk him down the aisle to the Chupa. His father had already passed away, but his mother had come to live here on her own. So, three of us, his mother, Carmela, and I walked with him to the Chupa to marry Eden. It was a very warm and special feeling, suddenly seeing Nikita as a grown man ready to get married. We have a lot of contact with him and meet frequently. He lives in Mazkeret Batya, and after his regular army service he continued in a military career.

Some years back, while Carmela and I were still working, I read a newspaper article about one of the very wealthy men in Israel at the time, called Lev Leviev, who was taking his whole family and friends in his private airplane to visit his roots. So, I said, “If he can do it, I can do it also.” Obviously, I did it more modestly with just my immediate family. At that time, we were a group of seven; Carmela and me, Iris, her husband Omri, and their two children, Yaara and Itay. Yotam was not yet born and Yaron was still single.

In 2002 we had a wonderful excursion to São Paulo, Brazil. It was really something. Iris and Omri also went to Iguaçu Falls to the fantastic waterfalls, the biggest and best in the world. Then, we went up to the mountains to Campos do Jordão, Salvador Bahia and Rio de Janeiro. It was a fantastic trip. The funny thing is Omri, when he was single, had been to Brazil, but everything went wrong on that visit. So, when I said that I was inviting everyone to come on this trip, he had doubts about it and was quite worried. However, we had a fantastic time, and he said that he hadn’t believed it could be so outstanding.

This gave me the idea to take the whole family on a trip from time to time — and that’s what we did over the next few years. The next time was in 2008 when we went to Poland to find my roots. Now we were nine people. We went via Warsaw to Bielsko, where I grew up until I was eight, and we left for France. It was very special and very interesting for all the family. By then, Yaron was romantically involved with a young girl, called Sarina, and she joined us on this trip.

We stayed for three days in Krakow, then traveled by car to Bielsko, where we saw the house where I grew up. We also met the lawyer who was so successful in getting it back for us and then went for three days to the mountains at Zakopane. Between Krakow and Bielsko, we made a very emotional visit to Auschwitz, where some of my family were probably tragically murdered.

After he finished Engineering school in Carmiel, Yaron went to work in the North of the country, for Rafael, a large Defense Systems company. He wanted to continue studying and registered at the Hebrew University and in the IDC in Herzliya. He didn’t receive a reply, and after one month he said to me, “Daddy, I am going to lose time. I will lose a full year,” so we decided that he should go to study in the USA. He went to New York and enrolled in Baruch College for his M.A. degree. After he left for the States, I received a nice reply from

OUR PRIDE AND JOY



Our cruise to Ushuaia, January 2017



Marietta, Nikita, Omri, Iris and children. Bansko 2011



Mimi, Jochanan, Pola, Carmela, Ruby our Israeli guide and Reuven, China, 2006



Sarina and Yaron's wedding, Jochanan, Carmela, Yaron, Sarina, Shabtai and Eileen Evan



Sarina and Yaron



Grandchildren Yaara, Itai and Yotam



Nikita and Eden's wedding

both institutions in Israel, especially the IDC saying that they would be very happy to accept him. I wrote them an angry letter saying that if they had not taken two months to answer, maybe this young man would have been studying in Israel now and not in New York.

As it happened, he met Sarina in New York, and soon after the wedding, they came to live in Israel. Sarina was a new immigrant and Yaron was a returning Israeli. He was working at Microsoft at that time and carried on working with them here. Sarina found a very interesting job and adapted well to Tel Aviv. They were becoming completely Israeli. Soon after their first baby, Ely, was born in Tel Hashomer, Yaron got a phone call from Google offering him a job in California. It seems it's difficult to say no to Google, and the result is that Yaron and Sarina went to live in California and later had a second baby, called Noam.

In 2009 we had an extraordinary trip to America when we all went to Yaron and Sarina's wedding. Iris and Omri had three children by then and apart from the wedding, we went to a very special place, Lake Tahoe, where Sarina's parents have a small bungalow near a fantastic lake. It was in January, so it was full of snow but was just fantastic. It was a pleasure to meet Sarina's parents, Shabtai and Eileen Evan who welcomed us and treated us so nicely. The wedding took place in San Jose, California, which is also near Saratoga where Sarina's parents live. It was a beautiful occasion with many friends attending. It was especially nice to meet Sarina's grandfather, Gershon Evan, who was also born in Vienna but before me. Luckily, he left Vienna shortly before the war, although he did suffer some time imprisoned by the Germans. In 1938 in Vienna, Gershon saw and lived through the introduction of what would happen when 2000 Jews were imprisoned in the camp and only 700 came out. This was the beginning of the 'Final Solution' the Nazis had for us. Gershon succeeded in leaving for British Palestine, but his parents, who stayed in Vienna, did not survive. He wrote a book called *Winds of Peace* about his life. It's a very interesting story of another life, different than mine, but very impressive.

Yaron and Sarina's wedding in California was in January 2009, but then in May of that year, we had their Israeli event (second wedding) at the Sharon hotel in front of the sea. It was a wonderful evening with family and friends. Sarina's parents, Eileen and Shabtai came together with her younger brother David with Lauren. The older brother Adam was not able to come.

Our next trip was in 2010, when the whole family went to Argentina — not just Buenos Aires, but also Bariloche and Calafate to see the fantastic Perito Moreno Glacier. It was the first skiing experience for most of our group. The next year we went skiing in Bansko, Bulgaria and Nikita came with us, which was very nice. Marietta also came to be with us in Bansko.

In 2012 we traveled to Lake Garda in Italy, and then in 2013, we decided to do something different and traveled to Russia. Our first stop was in Saint Petersburg, which was once Leningrad, and then to a small place in Finland, where we were the first Israelis ever to arrive there. The local newspaper interviewed us and published a special article with photos in the local newspaper. The lake in Finland was lovely.

In 2015 we decided to go again to Argentina. We went to Buenos Aires, Bariloche and Calafate. The last trip we had together was in 2016 which was quite different from the others, as we went to Alaska and Seattle. Alaska is a complicated place, and the weather was not very friendly, but it was very original, and we saw some unbelievable things including many bears and some other surprises.

Since then, we have not gone away together. Now that the grandchildren are older, they have different demands, and it hasn't worked out as a family. From 2000, Carmela and I traveled to Thailand, Spain, Barcelona, Portugal and Majorca. We visited Bielsko in Poland again, and Carmela joined me in Brazil, and we went to the Amazonas in the North with our good friends, Mimi and Itzik Mozes. We stayed in Manaus, the capital of the Amazonas; went up the river in the jungle; and stayed in a hotel in the middle of the river. When it rains, the river swells up and down, about five or six meters, so the hotel moves up and down as well.

We went to the Rocky Mountains in Canada with Marietta, and we were in Switzerland with George and Lia. At the Four Cantons Lake, we stayed in the Park Hotel Vitznau — a fantastic hotel. After that, we went to New York to visit Yaron, who had begun his romance with Sarina and stayed with them for about two weeks.

We found a fantastic Israeli guide, Rubi, when we were in China for three weeks, with our friends, Mimi, Itzik, Pola and Reuven, but I would need another

book to describe that visit. To celebrate our 45th wedding anniversary, we had a romantic trip to Amalfi, Capri, Pompei and Napoli. We flew again to America to visit Yaron and Sarina. They were married by then and living in Sunnyvale, California. After one of our trips to Brazil, we went to Cuba.

Another time, after Brazil, we went to Budapest (an incredible city) and saw a wonderful show with André Rieu. It was a special present from our children for our 50th wedding anniversary. Earlier, on February 28th, 2016, Carmela and I had celebrated by ourselves in Flims.

In the last few years, I had the idea of going on a cruise. I had to convince my wife that we should try it as she wasn't so keen on boats or the ocean. Luckily, Carmela is a good sport and ready for new adventures — otherwise, we wouldn't have been able to live the life we had in all the different countries. Our first cruise was from Singapore to Hong Kong. On the way we visited Vietnam, which was outstanding and different. We didn't know what to expect, and it was a very interesting and educational surprise. Our second cruise was in South America, from Valparaiso in Chile to Buenos Aires and around South America. On the way we stopped at the Falkland Islands and enjoyed seeing the penguins and other strange animals. We had a very nice cruise from Hamburg to Iceland, visiting some of the Norwegian and Danish islands, Scotland and back to Hamburg. The last cruise was from Barcelona to Morocco, including the Canary Islands, Madeira Island, and back to Barcelona. Since that last cruise, we had to cope with my wife's medical adventures, and the year 2020, which can be deleted from life because of Covid 19.

As I mentioned, Yaron, Sarina, and their two boys went to live in Los Gatos, California, and we visited them from time to time. Recently, Yaron's company offered him a position here and so the family relocated to Ra'anana in the summer of 2021.

Yaron's boys are called Ely Gavriel Drucker and Noam Rudi Drucker. The Gavriel is for Carmela's father, and Rudi is for mine. Yaron decided to drop the name Dekel and to return to the original family name of Drucker. So now the Druckers have at least two male descendants from the original Drucker family.

Our other three grandchildren in Israel, are Yaara, Itay and Yotam, but their family name is Shalit. We only have one granddaughter, Yaara — one of many

reasons that make her super special. They all give us immense pleasure. Omri has his own business; Iris works with the Israeli government as a lawyer in the Ministry of Environment. Two of our grandchildren, now (in 2022) are in the army. It's not easy, but something we have to accept as part of life in Israel. Our granddaughter, Yaara, is in a very special unit, and Itay is in the Navy. Yotam is 17, so he is still at school...

The last years have been normal, and Carmela and I are enjoying a pleasant life of retirement. We hope that our children and grandchildren will have the same luck that we had of living a good and happy life — always with adventures but hopefully only good and enjoyable ones.



Druckers: Three Generations



Eli's first birthday

Life itself is the most wonderful fairy tale.

Hans Christian Andersen

Anecdotes

Memory is one of our most extraordinary and complicated features. Sometimes we remember, and sometimes we forget. There are probably many things it is better to forget in life, but mostly, we have wonderful memories. I envy Dr. Joseph Burg, who served in ministerial positions for 40 years, and was my guest on various occasions for Campaign matters. At the age of over 80, he was able to recognize the Gabai in Stuttgart that he hadn't seen for 40 or 50 years. There are some short stories or events that became important and interesting parts of my life, alone or with my family, and I feel it would be a big 'miss' not to tell them.

Here we go — not in historical order:

During my period at Keren Hayesod, I was responsible for Iran for a while, although I never went there. We had some kind of indirect campaign there, and at one point, the chairman of the Jewish community of Teheran, Habib el Kanayan came to visit us in Israel. During the time he was here, Ayatollah Khomeini returned, and Iran changed. We tried to convince him not to go back, and I went with him to the Foreign Ministry and other offices. He told us, "Don't worry. I have friends with enormous influence. I have no reason to worry. My wife and children are in London, and I can always pay my way out." He went back, and some weeks later, we found out that he was hanged in the public square.


When our daughter Iris was in the Army, and we were on a mission for four years in Germany, there were some problems about the date she should receive her lieutenant rank. The worried — and not ‘normal’ father — picked up the phone in Frankfurt and called Iris’s superior officer in Israel, to check why his only and super precious daughter was depressed. After some phone calls, the officer, who was very kind, promised to solve all the matters and some days later Iris received her Lieutenant rank in the way she wanted. Strange father.

Didi Menusi was the first child to be born in ‘Kvutzat Geva.’ They were very proud of him, but as a young man, he decided to leave as he wanted to become a journalist. In that period, the kibbutz was very stern, took his decision very badly, and didn’t even allow him to come back to be present during the Pesach festivities.


We met Didi on two different occasions. The first was at an unbelievably lavish dinner with a very influential Druze family in the North. Didi was very critical in his newspaper articles about the person in the Government who was in charge of the Druze community. The idea of the dinner was to show Didi how much the Government employee, who was also with us, was respected by the Druze community.

The outstanding food was served by men, Jabba Mouaji’s (our host) sons. Two servings of meat were brought out on huge platters. The first time they were placed on our plates with elegant serving spoons. The second time they placed the food directly on our plates with their hands. I suspect the sons had a small drink every time they went to the kitchen. Later we found out that one of them had used the same hand the previous day to kill one of his father’s enemies. The dinner — outstanding — was a success and changed Didi’s mind.


The second time we met Didi was when he came to Brazil, and we took him by car from São Paulo to Guarujá. He began to speak non-stop as soon as we left and only made interruptions when I asked him to breathe. He had some fantastic stories.



When our grandson Itay, today in the navy, was four years old, we bought him an electric Jeep that he could drive. I will never forget his face the first time he saw it.



I will also never forget my son's face when a little before six one morning I arrived in his army base in Hatzerim with his 'diskit', which he had forgotten to take with him after his weekend at home. We knew he would be punished for not having it, so I left home before four in the morning. The first months in the Army were terrible and difficult for him. Carmela once took him by car down to Beersheba since he didn't want to return to the base on Sunday. Later he became an officer, and it all changed and became very positive.



We hate Alitalia. In 1972 while we were living in Argentina, Carmela and the children went on a trip to Israel. On the way back with Alitalia, the plane made an unplanned stop in Dakar, and the passengers were advised that it was due to a strike of all Italian crews and that they would have to stay there for at least 10 hours. Israel had no diplomatic relations with Senegal, and Carmela and the children could not leave the airport. Everybody, including the very 'friendly' crew from Alitalia, spent the day at the Hilton hotel, but Carmela and the children were left with a guard at the airport without knowing precisely for how long. They called me in Buenos Aires, and I became super anxious, trying to phone everybody. I even called the airport in Dakar, speaking in the name of Alitalia's representative for South America, Commendatore Thomasini, who I had never met, and who didn't know of my existence. I just discovered his name but couldn't reach him, so I called the airport in Dakar and asked why my family was being held. I don't think it helped at all, but when Carmela boarded the plane, one of the crew members said to her, "Commendatore Thomasini called



Itai and jeep




Pantheon of family photos in our dining room

about you.” After a 12-hour delay, the plane finally arrived in Buenos Aires. We decided that we would never fly Alitalia again.




I am very lucky that my father bought three pieces of land in Haifa when my parents were on their cruise to Egypt around the year 1935. The salesman, someone from Poland, wanted to show him the land, but my father being on a boat on a trip back to Europe, wasn't interested in going up the mountain. He thought there were probably wolves, jackals, and maybe some snakes up there. However, purely out of Jewish Zionist philanthropy, he bought the land. One of the plots later was turned into a large SQUARE by the British without any compensation. The second plot allowed my parents to buy a house in São Paulo, which gave them an income for many years.


I sold the third plot with the help of lawyer Otto Robinson from Bielsko, who lived in Haifa, and the income was distributed, one third for my father, one third for Marietta, and the other third for me. My third, approximately US\$18,000, allowed me to buy the plot in Herzliya and to begin paying for our house to be built.



A nice experience is to wake up on a Saturday morning with your young, just married wife and receive a phone call from one of her ex-boyfriends. We had just returned from our honeymoon to Brazil and were in our small one-room apartment in Ruth Street. The telephone rang, and this guy tried to convince her to come to America and be with him. He had made a huge mistake by letting her go, and maybe he regretted not asking her to marry him when they were dating. I don't know if she would have agreed, but he missed his chance. But I am lying next to my wife, and I hear her explaining to this guy that she is married. I believe that he might have been quite drunk when he made the call, but he tried his best. Luckily for me, Carmela didn't go!



This next story is from Carmela's family. Her family arrived from Bulgaria in 1949 and went to a 'ma'abara' in Pardes Hanna. Zico, her youngest brother, was barely four months old when he became very ill. Rachel, Carmela's mother, had to breastfeed him every few hours. She went to the infirmary at the 'ma'abara' and was told they couldn't help the child and that he probably wouldn't survive the night. Rachel, a very outstanding woman, was not going to give up so easily and, together with Gavriel, her husband, took their baby to the Hadassah Infirmary in Tel Aviv. Carmela, aged nine, Erica, her sister, aged six, and their grandfather, over 80, stayed in a tent in Pardes Hanna. At night it rained, and the tent collapsed, but they survived. They arrived at Hadassah in Tel Aviv with the sick baby but were told, "we cannot do anything as you belong to Pardes Hanna." Rachel said, "I know the baby is in bad shape, but I want him to survive. In Pardes Hanna they told me he wouldn't live. So, he can die here." She put the baby on the table and left. Everybody was astonished. Obviously, they took care of the baby, changed his blood twice during the night, and lucky Zico is very much alive today, over 70, with a wife, two children, and grandchildren. This is a story about a strong and dedicated mother.



I surely mentioned that I have a very special wife. Carmela is not an ordinary woman. She probably is a superwoman and could enter into competition with Gal Gadot. The following story happened when she was still in the Army, but she was serving in the X-ray Unit in Tel Hashomer as an army candidate for academic studies.


One day two policemen arrived with a dangerous murderer named Blit, who had to have an X-ray. When they were leaving, one of the guards was bringing the car around, and the second guard was a little distracted. Blit saw an opportunity and was reaching for this policeman's gun when the young, Carmela, interfered, moved his hand away, and called out to get the guard's attention. She probably saved a few people's lives. Blit tried to escape but was

caught and Carmela received an award, a Special Army commendation, for her heroic behavior.




During our period in Frankfurt, Germany, we lived in an apartment that belonged to a man called Sauerbier. I have two stories about him. The first one was that we invited him and his girlfriend for dinner to our house one evening, and during his explanation of how he bought the apartment at a public auction he repeated many times that every bid he made, 'that Jew in the corner' gave a counteroffer and raised the price. "Finally, I succeeded in buying the land." Carmela, in a nice way, said, "You are being antisemitic." Sauerbier was shocked, because possibly this was not his intention. That was the way he expressed himself. He did not agree, but later we came to know that his girlfriend told him in the car on the way home that Carmela was 100% correct in her remark. Sauerbier came to our house and apologized to Carmela.

He invited us for a flight on a small light aircraft — ultralight. The three of us, Carmela, me and Yaron arrived very excited. It was very interesting to fly over a whole expanse of land. It was only a two-seater, so it was him and one of us. After we finished flying, he asked us to meet his friends from the air group. Much later, he told us that he wanted that his friends would come to know some Israeli Jews and see how nice they were. We were the zoo.




Human beings are very different from each other. My good friend, Samario (Professor Chaitchik z"l) married and had a son, Moshe, who, today, is a very well-known doctor and surgeon. When Moshe was born about 60 years ago, I visited them in the hospital. It was the day before Yom Kippur, and we left the hospital quite early to avoid any problems on the journey home, but at that time, the only road back was near Bnei Brak, a very strict religious neighborhood. As we approached, we could see youngsters around the area with small stones and sticks, and other objects by the side of the road, showing

that they were preparing to close the street, even though it was still early and there was plenty of time before Yom Kippur. We could see them preparing for action, but they suddenly went away. Samario and I both thought they recognized that we were in a medical car. We believed that until we saw that there was a large police vehicle behind us. The medical sign had absolutely no influence, but luckily, the police car protected us. We arrived home safely.



Brazil is a unique country. Today there is a lot of violence because of the high level of poverty, enormous incompetence, and corruption in the Government. The people, though, by nature, are good, warm, and friendly. On our first trip to Brazil, we went to Bahia and took a car and a driver to visit a special beach with a fantastic collection of turtles. They are huge and can live for over 100 years. On our way back, we stopped to have lunch, and just then, it began to rain, and we couldn't sit outside on the terrace. When we returned to the hotel, I asked the driver how much I owed him. His name was Tim Maio, and he said to me, "Nothing." I asked him why, and he replied that he was very sad that our day had been ruined because it rained. It had only rained for about half an hour, and all it meant was that we couldn't sit outside to eat our lunch. We enjoyed our meal very much, and it didn't matter to us that we were seated inside. Tim repeated that he was sad because he believed our day was ruined. I did not give in and demanded that he accept full payment and gave him something extra as we came back very late. This is the regular character of a Brazilian!




When I was a boy aged 10-14 in São Paulo, we had a maid, but we also had someone who came once a week to wash and iron for us. Washing machines did not exist, neither did electric refrigerators. A van came round and brought us ice to the house.

The nice part that I remember is these two young women, our maid, and the washerwoman, telling me fantastic stories about Brazilian legends. I learned


about the Sacy, a unique creature with one foot and a red hat who does all sorts of 'tricks' and illusions that are passed down in family histories. Obviously, it does not exist, but the Brazilians believe in these legends. They also told me about the dangerous lobishomem, which is the wolf-man who can be very dangerous.

It has happened in the past when I have told a friendly acquaintance about a new project or an idea that I've had, he reacted with the question, "Are you crazy?" I don't know, but I once heard an anonymous saying: "I tell you, in this world, being a little crazy helps keep you sane."



What is my profession? I began to study mechanical electric engineering but stopped to go to Israel and became an electrician on the kibbutz. Later the kibbutz sent me on special Manpower activities in the Youth Movement. Going back to the kibbutz after washing dishes I became General Secretary, which is a mixture of Mayor and Rabbi. Leaving the kibbutz, I became Director of an Investment company and for a short period I was in charge of a nice jewelry business and secretary of the Israel-Brazil Chamber of Commerce. From then on, I was involved in a most interesting fund raising and Israeli public relations activity. Since I had to travel a lot, meet people and could not always give complete details to my friends and family, many of them are convinced — "who knows" — that in reality, I was working for the Mossad.

Last year, 2021, I flew to Brazil for a special event of our good friend Livia for the launching of her fantastic book. The Jewish newspaper wrote about the event and mentioned my presence and asked me what my profession is. I was confused and happy that they solved my problem: I am an Israeli diplomat.



I believe that I am very lucky to be able, together with my wife, to be very proud of our children. It's not easy to be a good, positive, honest, loving human being.

And they are! Kol HaKavod, Iris and Yaron.

I am finishing this book now, but I hope that I am not yet finishing my adventures. Sometimes thinking about everything that has happened in the past, I believe that I have been very lucky. Many small and larger events during the 91 years of my life are due to luck. Maybe I influenced this luck somehow, but things could have turned out differently. I do not doubt that the most significant stroke of luck in my life is my wife, and I just hope to go on enjoying every day with her.

There is a particular sentence by Lord Acton which quite fits here, "To be able to look back upon one's past life with satisfaction, is to live twice."

Our children around the world!



◀ *Yaron, Sarina and kids
in California*

▼ *Iris, Omri and kids
in Poland*



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All the blame for this book is on my dear wife, Carmela, and my fantastic children, Iris and Yaron. I didn't ever dream of writing my story, but some time ago, they began to press me, saying that I had a fascinating and original life, and they would love for it to be written down. However, all the content, comments, and mistakes are purely my fault.

I want to especially thank Carmela who was so kind to read every line and make many corrections. She gave all her help with patience and love.

Iris and Yaron gave me some ideas, for which I am very grateful.

My friends, especially my mentor, Dov Tzamir, are mentioned in the book, and I think of him frequently. The same with my other mentor, George Bleier, who became a very close friend.

It is also important to mention my sister, who received one or two chapters to read and gave her opinions, and my very good friend Vittorio who, after reading one chapter, told me undoubtedly that I should continue. Don't blame him.

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A big and very nice surprise was when Tito (Abraham Milgrom) one of my close colleagues from our Brazilian group, an experienced editor of various books, offered his help making various important remarks and corrections. Very much appreciated.

I don't think I will write another book, so dear friends, I am leaving you with these memories — good luck.

About 30 years ago, South American countries required passengers with Israeli passports to have entry visas. To make it easier for myself, I used my Brazilian passport when I was flying from Venezuela to Colombia. However, the woman at border control, saw that my ticket was made out to Jochanan Dekel, but my Brazilian passport was in the name of Hans Hermann Drucker. It took more than 30 minutes to clarify that it was really me, and in the meantime, the 21 people in the line behind me were after my blood!

Friends call me Joao or Juan – but these are still only a part of “All my Names.”

My wonderful and talented granddaughter, Yaara Shalit suggested the title and designed the cover for this book. I am extremely grateful for her input and proud to be her *Saba*.

Thank you.