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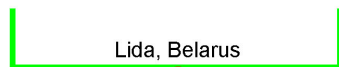
תקופת טבת תשע"ח – WINTER 2018

## Featured Lesson: Three Shuls in Flatbush ~ חוט המשולש

A Three-Stranded Cord Will Not Soon Break

Genya (Hanya) Beylya  
Anna  
Bayer

Joseph  
Savitsky (Sawicki)



Mordecai  
Savitsky  
(3 Jun 1911 - 8 Jun 1991)

This is the first in a series of articles designed to foster and illustrate the Genealogical Proof Standard ("GPS").

A family with strong roots in the United States has established more than one place of worship locally here in the neighborhood of Brooklyn called Flatbush (or Midwood). The Poupko, Savitsky

and Posy families all have their heritage in Eastern Europe. It is possible to construct a family tree spanning five generations using existing records.

The family, with many Rabbis, has shared three of its illustrious members with the local community:

1. Rabbi Solomon Poupko was the spiritual leader of a shul on Avenue I and East 4<sup>th</sup> Street.
2. Rabbi Jacob M Savitsky, nephew of Rabbi Poupko, is the leader of Congregation Bais Mordechai, a shul in the basement of his home on Bay Parkway and Avenue J.

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### MIDRASHIC GENEALOGY

by Moishe Miller

#### *Avraham's Daughter*

Did Avraham Avinu have a daughter? The Gemara (Bava Basra 16b) cites the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda that he did. It further cites "Others" who say her name was Bakol (as per Genesis 24:1). Torah Sheleimah, quoting Midrash Teimani (p. 944, footnotes), writes that her name was Kol.

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### "GPS" – The Genealogical Proof Standard

There are several legal approaches to proof including "preponderance of evidence" (51%) and "beyond a reasonable doubt" (99%). The Genealogical Proof Standard ("GPS") is a standard for establishing reasonable proof for a conclusion.

- 1: Reasonably thorough search
- 2: Informative citations
- 3: Analysis and comparison of sources
- 3: Resolution of any conflict
- 5: A written conclusion

A citation refers to a **source of information** yielding **evidence**. This can be broken down further, as:

- Source – Is it original, derivative or authored?
- Information – Is it primary, secondary or indeterminate?
- Evidence – Is it direct, indirect or negative?

A "Research Question" seeks specific information about a documented person. The question should not be too broad or too narrow in scope. It typically is one of three types (see examples):

- Relationship** – who were the parents of Pesach Dovid Miller of Zborov, Slovakia, born in the 1870's?
- Identity** – to which child of Abraham Miller does the 1874 Zborov, Slovakia birth record refer?
- Activity** – what was the profession of Pesach Dovid Miller, son of Avraham Aba of Zborov, Slovakia?

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3. Rabbi Chanoch Posy, son-in-law of Rabbi Savitsky, leads Congregation Shaar Hashamayim on Avenue M and Nostrand Avenue

A traditional search would begin with the current generation and work back from there. However, the families were not consulted. Therefore, the research process will start in the middle and work both forward and backward, using available public records.

### Part I – Savitsky Pedigree

When starting research, it is important to break down the research into defined, well-focused questions. Rabbi Savitsky was born into a well-known Rabbinical family from Boston. Searching for all Savitsky family entries in the 1940 census of Boston shows only 13 records, broken down into five families:

- Benjamin (b. 1881; Blacksmith)
- Eli (b. 1910; Upholstering)
- John (b. 1884; Cook)
- Michael (b. 1914; Production Manager)
- Mordecai (b. 1912; Clergyman)

It is logical that the starting point for a hypothesis would be with the only Rabbi listed in the census, the clergyman Rabbi Mordecai Savitsky of Boston.<sup>1</sup>

Searching JewishData yields an obituary for the Bostoner Gaon, Rabbi Mordechai Savitsky, giving vital details.<sup>2</sup> The obit states he arrived in the USA in 1939, that he headed the Rabbinat in Boston and that he passed away 27 Sivan 1991 (which is 8/9 Jun 1991).

The NY Times also printed an obituary for Rabbi Savitsky.<sup>3</sup> It

clearly lists his son, Yasacov [Yaacov] Moshe of Brooklyn as a son.

The history of Congregation Shaarei Tefillah in Newton, Massachusetts mentions that the congregation transitioned to the former residence of Rabbi Mordecai Savitsky in 1985.<sup>4</sup> It mentions that his home at 35 Morseland Avenue already had a synagogue in its basement

A check of the Social Security Death Index ("SSDI") shows only one record for a Mordecai Savitsky.<sup>5</sup> As per the entry, he was born 3 Jun 1911 and passed away in Jun 1991. This matches the detail in the census and the obituary.

The Wiki page for Joseph Rosen (known as the Rogatchover Gaon) has a list of students to whom he imparted Rabbinic Ordination.<sup>6</sup> It includes Mordecai Savitsky of Boston.

The above-cited obituary mentioned an arrival date of 1939. Using this clue to check ship arrivals for Mordecai Savitsky in 1939 at Ancestry.com yields nothing. A search at the American Ancestors website (by the New England Historic Genealogical Society) only has the SSDI entry. Searching Ellis Island using Steven Morse's one-step White Form, with first name start with "**Mord**" and surname sounds like "**Savitsky**" also offers no results. FamilySearch has more liberal search parameters. Searching for first name "**Mord\***" and a last name of "**Sa\***", with birth between 1910 and 1912 has 76 results for Migration & Naturalization. The third entry is for a NY Passenger Arrival of "Morduch Sawicki". Is this the right one?

The detail shows a man with the same birthdate, but not living in Boston.<sup>7</sup> Rather, this man was living in Haverhill, in the Massachusetts county of Essex.

Going back to Ancestry and searching again for "**Mord\***" and "**Savitsky**" under the Immigration & Emigration category shows a naturalization index record for a petition. This one is for a man named Mordecai Savitsky living in Roxbury, Massachusetts.<sup>8</sup> This is only an index; there are no declarations or petitions under this name. However, the index does list the number for this 1953 petition: 314654.

Going to the FamilySearch catalog and searching on a Place of "**Massachusetts**" and a keyword of "naturalization" shows

- United States, Massachusetts - Naturalization and citizenship (13).

Opening those 13 items shows:

- Massachusetts, naturalization records, 1907-1966.

Clicking further leads to:

- Petition and record, box 455, no. 313981-314900, 6 Feb-19 May 1953.

This has a camera icon next to it, which means the film is accessible. Clicking on the camera icon shows 1889 images. Image 1382 and 1383 are the pages of Mordecai Savitsky's Petition for Naturalization. Item nine on the first page of that petition states that he entered the country aboard the SS Aquitania on 31 March 1939 under the name Morduch Sawicki. It also confirms his birthdate as 3 June 1911 in the city of Lida, Poland (now Belarus). The list of five children includes Jacob, the Rabbi in Flatbush today.

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# Three Shuls in Flatbush ~ חוט המשולש

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Referencing GENI provides an entry for a Mordecai Savitsky.<sup>9</sup> It lists his place of burial as Mount of Olives, Jerusalem, Israel. There is a website to search interments at that cemetery and there is an entry for him. Pulling up the detail shows his death date as both 9 June 1991 and 27 Sivan 5751.<sup>10</sup> The dates match the SSDI and the obit image from JewishGen. The detail also lists his mother's name as Hena Baila. The prior obituary lists the father of Mordecai as Yosef. The U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index show his parents to be Joseph Savitsky and Anna Bayer.<sup>11</sup>

Searching JewishGen Belarus Database using the name from the ship manifest shows a birth record<sup>12</sup> for

- SAVITZKY, Mordukh
- Son of Iosif & Genya Beylya
- 3 June 1911
- In Lida

Do the sources meet the criteria for the first element of the GPS? Namely, was the research reasonably exhaustive? For Jewish research, a reasonably thorough search would include many sources. These include of birth, marriage, death, SSN, and cemetery records; as well as searches for obituary, census, military, passport, ship manifest, naturalization, city directory, oral history, DNA, deed (land), probate, newspaper, school yearbook, Yizkor plaque, Yizkor charity (like רמבה"ו) and פרענומעראנטן (donor list for the printing of Jewish books). Consulting most of these sources would typically meet the requirement of reasonably exhaustive. Considering that the family was not consulted, the conclusion is that a reasonably exhaustive search for the vital statistics of Mordecai Savitsky was in fact conducted.

1. 1940 U.S. Census, Suffolk county, Massachusetts, population schedule, Boston, Enumeration District (ED) 15-444, sheet 4-B, p. [not present], dwelling 568, family 90, Mordecai Savitsky; **imaged at**

*Ancestry* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 19 Dec 2017); citing National Archives microfilm publication T627, roll 4643.

2. Mayer S. Abramowitz, *Chachmei Yisroel of New England* : חכמי ישראל דניו ענגלאנד *Pictorial History of the New England Orthodox Rabbinate* (Worcester, Mass : Nathan Stolnitz Archives, 1991.), 35; **online image**, *JewishData.com* ([http://www.jewishdata.com/secure/record\\_detail.php?id=726510](http://www.jewishdata.com/secure/record_detail.php?id=726510) : accessed 19 Dec 2017).

3. "Mordecai Savitsky; Rabbi, 80," obituary, *New York Times (New York)*, 18 June 1991; **database**, *New York Times* (<http://www.nytimes.com/1991/06/18/obituaries/mordecai-savitsky-rabbi-80.html> : accessed 11 January 2018).

4. Andrew and Heather Greene, "Congregation Shaarei Tefillah," (<http://web.mit.edu/amgreene/st/fr-shulhist.html> : accessed 11 January 2018), A Home to Call Our Own.

5. Social Security Administration, "U.S. Social Security Death Index," **database**, *Ancestry* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 8 January 2018), entry for Mordecai Savitsky, Jun 1991, SS no. 022-30-4584.

6. *Wikipedia* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rogatchover\\_Gaon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rogatchover_Gaon)), "Rogatchover Gaon," rev. 00:23, 11 September 2017.

7. "Alien Crew List," S.S. Aquitania (Southampton to New York), date departed: 25 March 1939, date arrived: 31 March 1939, p.8, line 25, Morduch Sawicki; **imaged in** "New York, New York Passenger and Crew Lists, 1909, 1925-1957," **database with images**, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org> : accessed 15 January 2018"); citing National Archives Microfilm Publication T715,

*Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1897-1957*, microfilm # 6305.

8. "Index to Naturalization Petitions and Records of the U.S. District Court, 1906-1966, and the U.S. Circuit Court, 1906-1911, for the District of Massachusetts," entry for Mordecai Savitsky, digital image, *Ancestry* (<http://ancestry.com> : accessed 15 January 2018); **citing NARA publication M1545, roll 99**.

9. "GENI Tree," **database**, *geni.com* (<http://www.geni.com> : accessed 11 January 2018), "Rabbi Mordechai Savitsky" family tree by Daniel Zacharia Rosenzweig, Percy Mett and Yaakov Zelinger, profile for Mordecai Savitsky (b. 1911 in Lida, Lida District, Hrodna Region, Belarus - d. in 1991), undocumented data updated 19 June 2009.

10. *Mount of Olives*, **database** (<http://mountofolives.co.il/en/> : accessed 11 January 2018), entry for Mordechai Savitski (death date: 09/06/1991, Hebrew death date: א' תשנ"א)

11. Social Security Administration, "U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007," **database**, *Ancestry* (<http://www.ancestry.com> : accessed 11 January 2018), entry for Mordecai Savitsky, Jun 1991, SS no. 022-30-4584.

12. "Belarus Births Database," **database**, *JewishGen* (<https://www.jewishgen.org> : accessed 8 January 2018), entry for Savitzky, Mordukh, 6 March 1911 in Lida, Lida Ujezd, Vilna Guberniya, Belarus; **citing not microfilmed records from National Historic Archives Of Belarus ("NHAB") Hrodna, Belarus, Fond/Register (Opis)/Holding (Delo): 1817/1/57 (1896 - 1914), record # M31**.

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## Our Patriarch Avraham's Later Years

Avraham Avinu's permanent sojourn in the Land of Caanan began when he was about 75 years old, in the Hebrew year of 2023.<sup>i</sup> He resided in Chevron for 25 years and then in Philistia for 26 years.<sup>ii</sup>

The following is a breakdown of major events that occurred in Avraham's life after his arrival in Caanan:

- 2026: (age 78)Reu, great-great-grandfather of Avraham, passes away.<sup>iii</sup>
- 2033: (age 85) Avraham marries Hagar.<sup>iv</sup>
- 2034: Yishmael is born from the union with Hagar, when Avraham is 86.<sup>v</sup>
- 2047: (age 99) G-d commands Avraham to be circumcised.<sup>vi</sup>
- 2048: Yitzchok Avinu is born.<sup>vii</sup>
- 2049: Serug, great-grandfather of Avraham, passes away.<sup>viii</sup>
- 2083: (age 135) Terach, father of Avraham, passes away.<sup>ix</sup>
- 2085: Sarah Imeinu passes away at this time.<sup>x</sup> Rivka Imeinu is born.<sup>xi</sup>
- 2088: Avraham marries Keturah and Yitzchok marries Rivka.<sup>xii</sup>
- 2096: Arpachshad, g-g-g-g-g-grandfather of Avraham Avinu, passes away.<sup>xiii</sup>
- 2108: (age 160)Yaakov Avinu is born.<sup>xiv</sup>
- 2123: (age 175) Avraham Avinu passes away.<sup>xv</sup>

i. Genesis 12:4

ii. Rashi to Genesis 21:34 & 22:19 citing both Bereishis Rabbah 54:66 ([https://www.sefaria.org/Bereishit\\_Rabbah.54?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Bereishit_Rabbah.54?lang=bi)) and Seder Olam 1 ([http://www.sefaria.org/Seder\\_Olam\\_Rabbah.1?lang=bi](http://www.sefaria.org/Seder_Olam_Rabbah.1?lang=bi)).

iii. Genesis 11:21

iv. Genesis 16:3

v. Genesis 16:15 - 16;

vi. Genesis 17:10

vii. Genesis 21:5

viii. Genesis 11:23

ix. Genesis 11:32

x. Genesis 23:1

xi. Rashi to Genesis 25:20

xii. Rashi to Genesis 24:62 & Genesis 25:20

xiii. Genesis 11:13

xiv. Genesis 25:26

xv. Genesis 25:7

### MIDRASHIC GENEALOGY: *Cont. from first page*

Bereishis Rabbah (59:7) quotes Rabbi Yudan, who states that G-d gave Avraham a daughter. Rabbi Yonasan Eibshutz (in Tiferes Yonasan to Genesis 21:4, p. 35) says that when the Torah says **תא** ("Es"), it means that a twin was born. Yitzchak was born with a twin.

## Standards

### GEDCOM Standards for "GPS"

**GPS Standard #1 requires one to demonstrate thorough research, which is reasonably exhaustive:**

**Citations document at least two evidence items from independent sources & independent informants that are in agreement (no conflict).**

**Citations reference all sources competent genealogists would examine.**

**At least one citation documents primary information.**

**At least one citation documents an original source.**

**Only when an original source was not available did a citation use a derivative/authored source.**

**Only when primary information was not available did a citation use secondary/indeterminate information.**

**Citations reference all sources suggested by indexes or other sources.**



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