

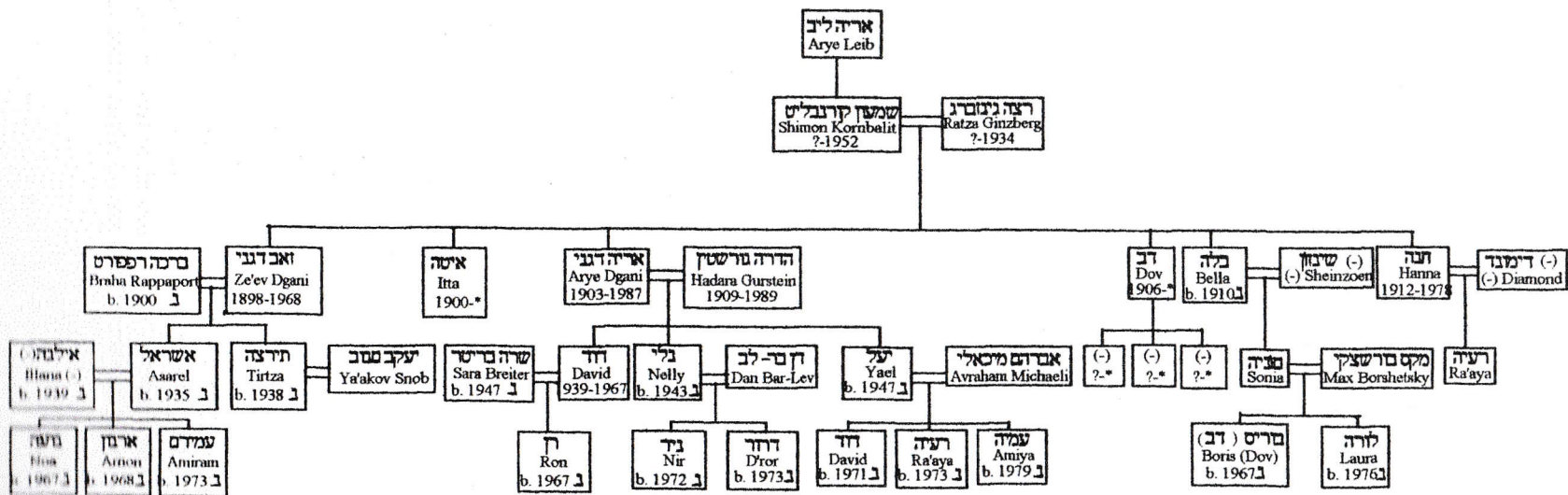
HISTORIES OF THE FAMILIES

GURSTEIN

PERCHIK

DGANI

compiled by Ron Degany Aviram
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LEGEND מפתח

* - perished in the Holocaust, exact date unknown
 (-) - name, or part of name unknown

DGANI¹

The origin of this family was a small village in the Ukraine called Husiatin.

"Its only claim to fame was the fact that directly on the opposite side of the border, there was another town with the identical name Husiatin (Galicia), which was famous because of the Rebbe, Rabbi Israel Friedman [a descendent of the Rujaner dynasty] ... The Jewish population was small, approximately 300 families. The town lies in a valley surrounded by three big mountains, which were settled by the Christian Ukrainians and a small number of Polish inhabitants. A small river, Zbrutch, flows through the valley that divides both Husiatins. At the old cemetery near the town, the inscriptions on the monuments were hardly legible. One can assume almost with certainty that Jews lived there for about 500 years ... From further research we learn that between 1650 - 1660 there were 1208 Jewish souls there."²

The earliest ancestor recalled was Arye Leib,³ described as a very educated and religious man. He worked in the tax department of the town's city hall. His son was Shimon Kornbalit. Shimon's wife was Ratza Ginzberg, described as a very smart woman who spoke Russian, German, and Yiddish. Their six children were Ze'ev, Itta, Arye, Dov, Hanna,⁴ and Bella. During the turbulent and difficult years of the First World War when opposing armies clashed near the town and interchangeably held it in their control, Shimon acted as mayor, because he was respected and supported by all sides due to his honest and trustworthy nature. Following the communist revolution in 1917, he was put to work in a factory. Ratza suffered from asthma and died on November 21, 1934 (Kislev 14, 5695). Shimon followed Ze'ev and Arye to Palestine in 1936.⁵ He worked at his sons' printing shops. Shimon had a very pleasant voice and often led religious services. The Nobel Prize winning author, S. Agnon, commented that he attended services only to hear him. Shimon was a short man, less than 5' 6", with brown hair and eyes.⁶ He died on April 4, 1952 (Nissan 9, 5712).⁷

Ze'ev was born in 1898 (Kislev 30).⁸ He immigrated to Palestine in 1922 and settled in Jerusalem. He hebraized his surname from Kornbalit to Dgani.⁹ He first worked as a clerk, and later, opened a print shop as did his brother, Arye. Ze'ev married Braha Rappaport (b. 1900) in 1932. Braha later became the head nurse at the Hadassah Medical Center. Their children are Asarel and Tirtza. Ze'ev died on September 9 (Elul 16, 5728)¹⁰ or August 11, 1968 (Av 17, 5728), of intestinal cancer. Braha moved to Ramat-Gan.¹¹

Asarel or "Asi" was born on May 9, 1935 (Iyar 6, 5695).¹² He and his wife, Illana [b. December 4, 1939 (Kislev 22, 5700)] had three children: Noa [b. August 22, 1967 (Av 16, 5727)], Arnon [b. October 28, 1968 (Heshvan 6, 5729)], and Amiram [b. September 22, 1973 (Elul 25, 5733)].¹³ Asarel is a tall man, openly expressive, and well versed in the humanities.¹⁴ Tirtza was born on April 15, 1938 (Nissan 14, 5698). Her husband's name is Ya'akov Snob.¹⁵

Itta was born in 1900. She perished in the Holocaust, probably with the rest of the Husiatin community in 1942.

Arye was born on July 3, 1903 (Tammuz 8, 5663).¹⁶ He came to Palestine in 1925 where, like his brother, he changed his surname to Dgani.¹⁷ Upon his arrival, he joined the Hagana.

"Then, every young person who came to the country came also to defend her. This consisted of guard duty, weapons training, the transport of weapons from place to place, and everything relating to self-defense."¹⁸

Arye worked in construction for a while, and then in other businesses. In 1931, Arye travelled to Grenoble, France, for two years in order to study mechanical engineering.

"He did this with excellence, but he did not finish because he had no food and no money, and he could not receive aid from anyone, because in the country, the situation was very difficult."¹⁹

Like many others in his social circle, he was multilingual, speaking English as well as French, Hebrew, Russian, and Yiddish.

"He knew close to ten languages, most of which he was able to write, read, and translate. That is how he started his business - translations turning into printing."²⁰ Arye opened a print shop like his brother, Ze'ev, naming his "Hama'atik".²¹ He married Hadara Gurstein on April 12, 1938 (Nissan 11, 5698).²² They had three children: David, Nelly, and Yael. Arye's print shop on Ben Yehuda Street was one of numerous structures destroyed on February 22, 1948 (Adar 12, 5708) by a bomb explosion. Had he followed his normal daily routine, chances are that he would have been one of the many casualties. That day, however, his infant daughter Yael, was crying hysterically for some undetermined reason, and would not allow him to leave for work until after the blast did its damage. Arye opened another print shop, at which he printed many government and politically related documents over the years.²³

"He was also very active in public affairs, a party member, chairman of the Association of Business Owners, chairman of the local Parent Teacher Association and then administrator of the national Parent Teacher Association, and so on."²⁴

The family spent its vacations at its Natania residence.²⁵ Although the family was predominantly secular, Arye became somewhat more religiously observant following his son's death, attending services to say Kaddish during the mourning period. He sublimated his grief by devoting much of his energy and passions to the development of public works, among them a school and Jerusalem's Yad L'Bannim memorial. For his services, he received many honors, among them the Yakir Yerushalaim. Even in his later years, he was an energetic man - short, with blue eyes and white hairs around an otherwise bare head, and a warm, compassionate face with the cleft-chin family trait.²⁶ He was reminiscent of David Ben-Gurion, both physically and convictionwise. Following a series of health complications, including a stroke and a heart attack, his constitution deteriorated. Arye and Hadara moved to an apartment which had easier access for the elderly couple.²⁷ The building had an elevator, and the apartment had a pleasant view of the Knesset and the Israel Museum from the balcony. Unfortunately, they never had an opportunity to truly enjoy it. Arye was haunted by nightmares, such as those of wailing women, foreshadowing his demise. He passed away in the spring of 1987 and was buried besides his brother, Ze'ev, and his family. Arye was posthumously honored by the Knesset.

A biography of David Dgani is listed in the Yizkor, a memorial book for I.D.F. war dead:²⁸

DGANI, DAVID ("Doodi")

Son of Arye and Hadara. Born on the 18th day of Sh'vat, 5699 (7.2.1939) in Jerusalem. In his father's home, from veterans of the Hagana in Jerusalem, he absorbed the love and the traditions of his people and homeland. He received his elementary education at the Hebrew Gymnasium in Rahavia, and after that, he received his secondary education at the high school. He developed different skills and particularly hand-crafts. When he participated in a "ganigar" group, he noticeably displayed a love for nature and biological studies. He joined the GaDNA and excelled in rifle marksmanship. He participated in tournaments and won championships. He was conscripted into Tzahal [I.D.F.] in August 1958 and strived to fulfill his childhood dream of becoming a pilot but this was not to be for various reasons.²⁹ He was an instructor in the GaDNA. When he went into the reserves, he became a communications officer in the armored forces. After his discharge, he began to work with his father at the print shop. Seven years he worked there because he was adept at the job and loved it and became skilled to a very high degree. From childhood he was fascinated by the secrets of technology and machinery and when he matured, he invested in his work with his father in all that he saw as advancements in the printing business; he also invented methods to improve them. He strived for occupational perfection from an inner drive. In everyday work, he excelled also in courtesy to customers and tried to assist with ideas and instructions. A noticeable personal trait deserves praise - that of honoring his father, with whom he worked since his discharge. He enjoyed books and music. With the growing tensions before the Six Day War, he was among the first to be called and went to fulfill his national duty quietly and confidently as was his nature. His unit fought in the first attack on Egyptian positions, and in one of the Gazan battles in the taking of Gaza, David covered his comrades in arms by taking the position³⁰ of the machine-gunner who was wounded, and through acts of bravery and self-sacrifice David saved many of his friends but he himself was struck by a bullet in his head and fell; this was on the first day of battles, the 26 of Iyar 5727 (5.6.1967). He left behind a wife and a three

month old baby. He was brought for internment to the military cemetery at Ba'ari during the time of war and after a while was transferred to his eternal rest at the military cemetery on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem. His obituary was publicized in the news of the Agricultural Organization.

David was a good person - far beyond the average character.³¹ He studied the violin, unlike his sisters and cousin, Asarel, who studied the piano. David was a tall man, about 6'1", handsome, with wavy brown hair and blue eyes. But he was somewhat shy, having had only one steady girlfriend before he married Sara Breiter on May 19, 1966 (Sivan 1, 5726).³² David and Sara lived in the Beit Hakerem region of Jerusalem. David enjoyed quiet, reflective walks in the peaceful, parklike atmosphere of the neighboring military cemetery on Mount Herzl, where he was eventually laid to rest.

David and Sara's son, Ron,³³ was born in the rainy, early morning of March 5, 1967 (Adar 23, 5727) in the nearby Hadassah Medical Center. Despite the fact that David did not have the opportunity to influence Ron's development for very long, they have many similarities, including common interests and aspirations in flight, photography, and shared atrocious penmanship. Physically, Ron is visibly a combination of both sides of his parentage. Ron came to the United States with his mother and sister on July 5, 1974. Michael Aviram, Sara's second husband, preceded them by a few months in order to make the necessary preparations. They settled in Orange County, California, near Michael's friends. Ron graduated from the public John F. Kennedy High School in La Palma in 1985, where he was particularly active in the school band, playing various low brass instruments. Ron's musical education was augmented by seven years of formal piano studies. With a wide range of interests including a strong one in the sciences, Ron attended the University of California, Irvine, where he took an active role in various organizations, both social and professional, including the student government and the Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity (AEPI), as well as intramural sports. Ron graduated in 1989 with a bachelor of science degree in electrical engineering and has worked a variety of jobs since.³⁴

Nelly was born on February 3, 1943 (Sh'vat 28, 5703). She is also well-versed in the humanities, having studied dance, possessing an appropriately tall and wiry physique, and the piano to performance level. She married Dan Bar-Lev, an economist from a family of leftist, extremely secular zionists. They moved to York where two sons were born, Nir on September 19, 1972 (Tishrei 11, 5733), and Dror on November 25, 1973 (Heshvan 30, 5734). They returned to Israel in 1974 and settled in Haifa.³⁵ Having studied law, Nelly is a legal adviser for the Ports and Railways Authority for the Port of Haifa. Nir's technological interests were utilized in the army where he specialized as a computer operator/technologist, with an eye on a possible future career in computer science.

Yael was born on March 17, 1947 (Adar 25, 5707). She is an emotionally expressive person, with soft and rounded features in contrast to Nelly's sharper and more angular ones. She studied political science at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and later became actively involved in Israeli right-wing politics.³⁶ Multilingual like the rest of her family, she translates foreign news for Israeli radio. Yael married Avraham "Avi" Michaeli on July 16, 1970 (Tammuz 12, 5730).³⁷ He worked in the Arye Dgani's print shop and eventually inherited it. The Michaelis have three children; David ("Doodi")³⁸ was born on December 11, 1971 (Kislev 23, 5732). Ra'aya was born on November 12, 1973 (Heshvan 17, 5734).³⁹ Amiya was born on September 3, 1979 (Elul 11, 5739).⁴⁰

Following Hadara's passing, Nelly and Yael's interpersonal relationship was strained to the breaking point by the quarrels regarding the division of the Dgani estate. Attempts at mediation by Sara Aviram proved futile.⁴¹

Dov⁴² was born in 1906. He had a love for military pageantry. He perished in the holocaust with his three children.

Bella Kornbalit Sheinzoen⁴³ was born in 1910. Her only daughter, Sonia Sheinzoen, married Max Borshetsky. Their children are Boris (Hebrew: Dov) and Laura. Boris was born in March, 1967. He suffers

from Down's Syndrome. Laura was born in June, 1976. They all emigrated from the Soviet Union to Israel in 1978. A few years later, the Borshetskys moved to the United States.

Hanna Kornbalit Diamond (1912-1978) had one daughter, Ra'aya Diamond.⁴⁴

NOTES

¹ Arye Dgani interviews, 1980, unless otherwise noted.

² Benjamin Diamond, ed., *Husiatin - Podolia (Ukraine): Jewish Settlement Founded in 16th Century Annihilated in 1942* (New York: Waldon Press, Inc., 1968), p. 1-2. Copies of this rare book, dedicated to the memory of its martyred residents, were distributed to its former residents. I have Arye Dgani's copy. - compiler.

³ Arye Dgani's grandfather. The Husiatin memorial book, shows a picture of a man named Leib Kombalit. If they are the same person, it would account for the missing surname. The same photograph shows a man by the name of Yosef Ginzberg, possibly a relative of Ratza Ginzberg, the wife of Shimon Kombalit.

⁴ In an effort to maintain authentic pronunciations of non-English words, particularly certain names, "h" is used throughout this project as the sound equivalent to that of the eighth Hebrew letter, ח, although the traditional "ch" was maintained for that sound in readily recognizable words and quotes. Vowels in most of the non-English words are pronounced similarly to Spanish vowels.

⁵ Arye Dgani interviews, 1980. Hadara Dgani, Correspondence, January 18, 1981, dates the aliya to 1933. However, I find it doubtful that Shimon would have left his wife unattended considering her state of health. I believe that he also hebraized his surname to Dgani. - compiler.

⁶ Recollection of a passport-like document I have seen in the Dgani home in Jerusalem in 1985. The photograph showed Shimon with a friendly smile and a closely trimmed beard. - compiler.

⁷ 1980 interviews gave Iyar 7, 5712 as the corresponding Hebrew date of death, but that date fell on May 2, 1952.

⁸ The date of birth given at the 1980 interviews was Kislev 30 of the year corresponding to the Gregorian 1898 (5659). Kislev only had 29 days. Kislev 29, 1898 corresponds to December 13, 1898.

⁹ I think that Ze'ev is a hebraized version of his given name. - compiler.

¹⁰ Hadara Dgani correspondence, January 18, 1981.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² The Hebrew date of birth given at the 1980 interviews was Iyar 2, 5695, but that date corresponds to May 5, 1935.

¹³ 1980 interviews gave the Hebrew date of Amiram's birth as Elul 27, 5733, but that date corresponds to September 24, 1973. The address of Asarel's family at the time was Hameshoreret Ra'iel 7, Jerusalem.

¹⁴ I have a book of Asi Dgani's poetry in my possession. He is the one example of what my father may have been like. - compiler.

¹⁵ Lack of information regarding her is largely due to her distancing herself from her brother's family.

¹⁶ 1980 interviews gave the Hebrew date of birth as Av 7, 5663, but that date corresponds to July 31, 1903.

¹⁷ It is likely that Arye is also a hebraized version of his given name.

¹⁸ Hadara Dgani correspondence, January 18, 1981.

¹⁹ Nelly Bar-Lev correspondence, July 4, 1992, p 4, trans. compiler.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ These were the first modern printing presses in Jerusalem. - Sara Breiter Dgani Aviram.

²² Nissan 12, 5698 if the wedding took place in the evening of April 12, 1938.

23 Address of "Hama'atik" Press in 1993: 7 Ben-Hillel Street, Jerusalem, Israel.

24 Nelly Bar-Lev correspondence, July 4, 1992, p. 4, trans. compiler. She continues, "In my opinion, if he was not occupied with problems of finance and self-preservation, he could have participated in politics, and even been a minister. But the period in which they lived was very difficult - riots against Jews all the years (Mandate period) and then wars in the land, economic problems - the 1950s were years of apportionment. And more. But we were definitely a Zionist family and tied to the land and the state of which we were a part."

25 The Jerusalem home was an apartment on the fourth floor of the building located at 31 King George Street. Outside the front door, the opaque glass window near the top of the staircase contained a bullet hole from one of the many clashes that were the birth pangs and growing pains of modern Israel. The apartment's tiled floors were covered with rugs. From the patio overlooking the busy road, a person could easily view the building on the other side of the street that housed the Knesset before it moved to its present location as well as the parades that passed below during the early years of statehood. The Apartment itself had an air of dignity about it that was personified by its occupants. The old books in Russian and other languages were boxed away in cabinets and only Hebrew books were on the shelves. My grandparents explained that they wanted to make a fresh start when they made aliya. The apartment was described as a sort of museum in itself; the various items and knickknacks in the china cabinet collected over the years largely from Europe had in themselves interesting histories associated with their origins or acquisition. It is from this place that I recall my earliest memories and experiences. - compiler.

26 Personal recollections. - compiler.

27 4 Tchamichovski Street, Jerusalem.

28 Translated by compiler.

29 He failed the pressure chamber tests.

30 Aboard the half-track vehicle.

31 This was a point heavily emphasized during the interviews.

32 Sara Aviram interviews.

33 Named for his maternal grandmother, Shprintza, through letter extraction

שפרינצא
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17

34 Compiler.

35 Bar-Lev address in 1993: 10a Smolenskin Street, Haifa 34368, Israel.

36 She pulled other members of the family to this end of the political spectrum who I did not expect to sympathize with the parties of this end, such as her cool-headed husband and mother, who was long married to a man with leftist leanings. - compiler.

37 Michaeli address in 1993: 18 Klausner Street, Talpiot, Jerusalem 93388, Israel.

38 Named for David Dgani.

39 One of Ra'aya's more memorable physical traits, many of which she inherited from her father's side, are her dimples. - compiler.

40 Certain photographs of David Dgani as a child would attest to remarkable similarities to Amiya in her early years. - compiler.

41 The attempts to resolve the dispute is reminiscent of ancient Greek trials, in which issues were decided by appeals to the jury's (Sara's) logic - personified by Nelly, emotions - embodied in Yael, and the authority of the protagonists - which would have been represented by David Dgani. - compiler.

42 Probably called Boris. - compiler.

43 The book, *Husiatin - Podolia (Ukraine): Jewish Settlement Founded in 16th Century Annihilated in 1942*, features several photographs of people bearing the Sheinzoen surname.

44 The book, *Husiatin - Podolia (Ukraine): Jewish Settlement Founded in 16th Century Annihilated in 1942*, features several photographs and details of people bearing the Diamond surname.