

SOLOMONS Of AFRICA

By

Robert S. Sherins, M.D.

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Beryle Solomon Buchman

Computer Text Editor

Plant City, Florida

Preface

“Solomons are strong, independent, and take care of their own!”¹ The oral history of our family from Pungesti, Romania, indicated that the Solomons had lived there “...for as long as anyone could remember.”² In Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia, Silvi Max Solomon told, “...of the Solomons, who had lived in Pungesti for 900 years.”³

The discovery and subsequent reunion of the several branches of the Solomon family in Africa, America, Australia, Israel, and the United Kingdom has created the opportunity to share the histories of our families after they had been separated over the past century. This publication is a compilation of many archival documents, text publications, oral histories, maps with encyclopedic information, research among several Jewish cemeteries in Africa, America, and Romania, submission of personal family photographs, and the generously offered narratives and biographies from our cousins and friends.

Contained in this publication are the transcribed narratives of several cousins. They have been divided into chapters. This chapter includes information that was excerpted from two books⁴ and several letters sent to us by our cousins. Additional commentary and footnotes have been added, providing an overview of the immigration of the Solomon family.

The document, *Memoirs of Max Solomon’s Descendants*, written by Victor Solomon, was recorded in the home of Robert and Marlene Sherins in Pacific Palisades, California, in August 1999. The interview stimulated his

¹ This was the philosophy of Rudolph Solomon, our American patriarch, father of Beryle Solomon Buchman, and uncle of Richard and Robert Sherins. He must have heard this often stated by his family in Pungesti. His grandfather, Schneer Zalman Solomon, owned a flour mill in Pungesti, and many business stores on the main street of their *shtetl*. From Romania, Zalman’s children ventured forth on three continents: Africa, America, and Europe.

² Private conversations with our aunt Jeanette Solomon Schweid between 1960 and 1996, in Miami Beach, Florida, and Pacific Palisades, California.

³ Silvi, another grandson of Schneer Zalman Solomon, also claimed that the Edelstein family of his mother, had lived in Vaslui, nearby Pungesti, for possibly 1100 years.

⁴ Hugh Macmillan and Frank Shapiro: *Zion in Africa, The Jews of Zambia*. I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd., London and New York, 1999 and Kosmin, Barry A., *Majuta: A History of the Jewish Community of Zimbabwe*. Foreword by M Gelfand. Published by Mambo Press, Gwelo: 1981.

family to sit down to discuss the details of his narrative. Robert and Karen, Steven and Monica, and Victor and Roslyn examined the narrative together and then made additions and corrections. This is a fine example of bonding of family members that can occur when researching family history. Louis and Sadie Herscovitz made significant additional comments. Louis also photographed the family tombstones at the Jewish Cemetery in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

Robert and Marlene Sherins visited cousins, Jerry and Irene Salomon, and their children and grandchildren, Trevor, Yvonne, Doron and Talia, and Nigel, Tova, Joel, and Marc, in London in June 1999. It was a joyous reunion for all of us.

Jerry recalled his childhood memories as a boy in Elizabethville, Belgian Congo, and as a student at Milton Middle School in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia. He had fascinating tales of his engagement to Irene. His document, **Salomon Family Biographies**, is a marvelous history of their family life.

Our friend Helman Todes, who was born in South Africa, is not a Solomon relative. He dictated his personal family history in South Africa that has been transcribed in *Personal Recollections of Jewish Immigrant History in South Africa*. His articulate narrative added immensely to our publication and provided details about the lives of Jewish immigrant families in southern Africa. We are grateful to Helman and his wife, Norma, for their participation.

Jay Patel, M.D. is a physician and Ophthalmologist colleague of Robert's at Saint John's Health Center in Santa Monica, California. Jay's father had immigrated to Africa from India early in the 1900's and became a general storekeeper in Harare, Rhodesia. Later, Jay's uncle set up a branch of the family business in Bulawayo and worked with and knew our Solomon ancestors. His story, *Personal Memories of Southern Rhodesia*, is transcribed and provides a unique insight into the difficult circumstances that immigrants had to endure. Jay commented, **"...the key to progress and advancement for immigrants is their access to education!"**

Lilian Cave, Jerry Salomon's sister-in-law, was interviewed by her friend, Rita Roberts. Nigel and Trevor Salomon offered a copy of this transcription, *Biography of Lilian Cave*, to Robert during his visit to London in June

1999. It provides the reader with detailed and unique views of her personal life, language, and situations that were commonplace in England at that time.

Victor introduced us to his friend Rose Norwich, in Johannesburg. She was quite knowledgeable about the Salomon history in Africa. She was able to obtain a copy of Kosmin's book, *Majuta*, which has been out of print for many years. By faxing the appropriate pages, she passed along to Robert many details about Charelik Salomon. Later, Louis Herscovitz's family did locate a copy of *Majuta* and mailed it to Robert. Rose then contacted Hazel Hochschild, who is a descendant of Rosie Salomon, daughter of Eshlomo Salomon. Hazel and her son Simon have contributed further details about the family. Lastly, John Kaufman, president of *Kaufman Sons & Co.*, in Bulawayo, contacted me with yet additional information about Charelik Salomon and further data about both the Salomon and Kaufman families. Oscar Kaufman, John's grandfather, had been a business partner of Charelik. The original firm still exists although there have been several name changes from *Salomon & Steinman*, *C. Salomon Co.*, *Salomon-Kaufman & Co.*, and *Kaufman Sons & Co.* Mr. Arthur Kaplan and his associates, Glenda and Jack Stidolph, of the Central African Zionist Organization in Bulawayo, have contributed further family facts, maps, and a copy of the publication of the Centennial Celebration of the Bulawayo Hebrew Congregation, 5654-5754 (1894-1994).

In the course of genealogical research, there are infrequent serendipitous events. Such is the manner in which Robert Sherins and John Kaufman met. If it were not for the request for a street map of Bulawayo, they might never have been introduced. In the summer of 1999, Robert's family friend in Los Angeles was taking her holiday in Zimbabwe. As a favor, he had requested that a simple street map of Bulawayo be purchased. None was available in Harare where the friend was touring. However, the storekeeper gave his e-mail address for Robert to correspond in his further pursuit of the Solomon family history. After the first message was sent, no immediate reply came forth. Unbeknown to Robert, the storekeeper passed the message on to a friend in Victoria Falls. That individual investigated the telephone directory of Bulawayo and made a long distance call to John Kaufman. That phone call set into motion direct correspondence between John and Robert. But for the sake of a simple request for a street map, their meeting would not likely to have occurred. As a result of this chance introduction, much specific information about the Solomon and Kaufman family histories was

discovered, and two additional documents were transcribed by John. They have been included in this publication.

Another similar tale of accidental happenings occurred while attending a birthday party of a friend in Los Angeles during July 1999. I was overheard speaking about our family history in Zimbabwe that I had just discovered. A very nice couple approached to inquire. They said how coincidental this was because they were immigrants to Los Angeles from Bulawayo. It wasn't long before they made the connection to our Solomon family. It seems that Silvi Max Solomon had been their friend and taught this couple to golf and play bowles. As a result, they did some personal investigation and called me the next day to forward the name and address of Mr. Arthur Kaplan, president of the Central Zionist Organization in Africa (CAZO) in Bulawayo. Mr. Kaplan ultimately responded with many stories about the Solomon family and particularly Charelik, whom he knew. He also forwarded three copies of the centennial commemorative issue (1894-1994) of the Hebrew Congregation of Bulawayo that included numerous articles about the life and times of the Jewish community of Bulawayo. There were many references to both the Kaufman and Solomon families.

David Salomon, grandson of Eshlomo (Solomon) Salomon, from Cape Town, South Africa, has given us other vital information about the family. This has included copies of archival documents of Letters and Certificates of Naturalization from Southern Rhodesia that proved that Negresti, Romania, was the birth place of Eshlomo Salomon and further documented the years of birth of Eshlomo and his son Harry (Aaron).

It has been possible to gather our family histories as the result of the continued research partnership of the authors over the past twenty-five years: first cousin, Beryle Solomon Buchman, in Plant City, Florida; and twins, Richard J. Sherins, M.D., in Potomac, Maryland, and Robert S. Sherins, M.D., in Pacific Palisades, California. We are grateful to our cousins and friends who have offered their materials and encouragement that permitted us to review, create the commentary, and edit their documents for publication.

Thank you,

Robert, Richard, and Beryle

Introduction⁵

Our Solomon ancestors first arrived in Africa in the 1880's. This is an estimate based upon our calculated age for Ilie Salomon. He was reported to have been about 19 or 20 years of age when he arrived in Elizabethville, Belgian Congo.⁶ The oldest archival document known to exist listed him in 1892.⁷ Since he was born in Pungesti in 1860, the oldest son of Schneer Zalman Solomon, he would have been 32 years of age by that date on the document. Modern Jewish presence in central and southern Africa began about the time that Ilie immigrated. Immigration intensified after the discovery of gold in 1869 and diamonds in 1875. Our family members continued to leave Romania for Africa and America from the period of the 1880's until the 1920's. Charelik Salomon has been recognized for his patronage and philanthropy in bringing numerous relatives and other friends from the villages of Moldavia to Africa. Often they worked for Charelik in one of his several companies in central Africa.

The ethnicity of the Jewish immigrants to Africa was represented by varied geographic locations.⁸ Lithuanians tended to settle in South Africa, Bulawayo, or Gwanda. Latvians were more evenly spread in the territory. Romanians were mostly concentrated in Bulawayo, Rhodesia. The Sephardim preferred Mashonaland, settling nearby Salisbury⁹ and Umtali.

The Romanian immigrants came mostly from an area in Northern Moldavia from the towns and nearby villages of Iasi, Roman, Peatr Neamt, and Vaslui. Charelik Salomon was the major patron of this movement. He was born in Negresti, near Vaslui. He arrived in Bulawayo in 1894 and opened a store near that location. He rose rapidly to become a successful wholesaler in the years before 1914. The Romanian immigrants came from the Vaslui

⁵ Hugh Macmillan and Frank Shapiro: *Zion in Africa, The Jews of Zambia*. I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., London and New York, 1999. Excerpted and commentary by Robert S. Sherins, M.D., October 25, 1999.

⁶ Now known as Lubumbashi, Congo. To keep the historical and modern facts correct, the name of the place that was used by the ancestors or current family members will be used in the text.

⁷ Louis Herscovitz showed this document to Nigel Salomon

⁸ Excerpted from Kosmin, Barry A., *Majuta: A History of the Jewish Community of Zimbabwe*. Foreword by M Gelfand. Published by Mambo Press, Gwelo: 1981.

⁹ Now known as Harare, Zimbabwe.

Judete,¹⁰ settled in Bulawayo, and engaged in retailing to the African market, which was called the *kaffir truck trade*.¹¹ Among the numerous traders were S. Salomon and H. Salomon.¹² The immigration laws favored a patron-client pattern of business because the guarantee of a job or evidence of financial support was necessary to be able to gain entry into the African countries. Group migrations from Eastern Europe were discouraged. In addition, the Ashkenasim from Europe were favored over the Sephardim. A Yiddish language test was given to immigrants as a literacy test that tended to favor the Ashkenasim, since the Sephardim were not as fluent in Yiddish and spoke Ladino.¹³ The literacy test became mandatory under the Immigration Ordinance of 1904 in southern Africa.

In addition to Ilie Salomon, eldest child of Schneer Zalman Solomon and his first wife Dina Gross, there were other early Solomon settlers from Pungesti and Negresti, Romania. Two sons of Schneer Zalman and his second wife Feige, AZ and MZ (Max), partnered in business. Charelik Salomon¹⁴ was a wealthy wholesale merchant and philanthropist in Southern Rhodesia.¹⁵ Dinah Solomon, daughter of Ilie Salomon, married Samuel Herscovitz in Manchester and moved to Elizabethville initially. After working for Ilie, they moved to Bulawayo. Max Solomon immigrated to Bulawayo about 1910. He married Jeanette Edelstein. Not surprisingly, she came from Vaslui, Romania, a town near Pungesti.¹⁶

There are three Jack Salomons in our Solomon family. Schneer Zalman had a son, Saul Solomon, in Pungesti. Saul's oldest son was Jack Solomon, who married Fanny, in Galatz, Romania, in 1907. Ilie Salomon also had a son

¹⁰ *Judete* is the Romanian word for the geographic distinction of *county* or *district*.

¹¹ *Kaffir* is a derogatory remark that refers to black native Africans. The term *kaffir* was derived from the Arabic word *Khufir* that referred to non-Muslims. Thus, in Arabic, the term *Khufir* referred equally to whites, blacks, or any other non-Muslim racial group.

¹² We presume that this refers to Solomon [Eshlomo] Salomon, who was the son of Dov Ber Salomon from Negresti, Romania, and Harry [Aaron] Salomon, grandson of Eshlomo and son of Abe Salomon.

¹³ Language of the Spanish Jews. It uses the Hebrew letters in the Spanish language.

¹⁴ Hugh Macmillan and Frank Shapiro: *Zion of Africa, The Jews of Zambia (Northern Rhodesia)* I.B.Tauris & Co. Ltd, 1999, pages 16, 22, 40, 42-43, 52, 135.

¹⁵ In 1960, after Independence, Southern Rhodesia became known as Zimbabwe; Northern Rhodesia became Zambia.

¹⁶ Immigrants often married individuals from the same village or country, where there was a common language between them. In this particular case, Max and Jeanette were most comfortable speaking in their native Romanian language.

named Jack. He married Pauline Jackson.¹⁷ Their daughter Grace Salomon Pick currently lives in Cape Town, South Africa. Lastly, Charelik had an only surviving child, named Jack.¹⁸ He married but had no issue. Jack became executor of Charelik's trusts until he retired to Cape Town.¹⁹

AZ Salomon married Rachelle and had three children: Benny, Eddie, and Rosie. AZ Salomon died in 1926 as a drowning victim. Benny also drowned in Plumtree earlier in the mid-1920's. He may have been the one who was claimed to have been eaten by a crocodile.²⁰ Eddie remained unmarried and had no issue. Rosie married Harry Pachanik and lived in Harare, Zimbabwe, with their children.

The history of Jewish immigration to central Africa is a tangled trail of incredible stories and hardships. However, the events that occurred among our particular Solomon ancestors are recent, having developed only within the past one hundred ten years. The Solomon family history is a small part

¹⁷ In correspondence received from Louis Herscovitz by Robert Sherins and Beryle Buchman, May 18, 2000, Louis made several editorial remarks. He stated that he remembered attending the wedding of Jack Salomon and Pauline Rossen of Salisbury, now known as Harare. When Jack passed away, Pauline married Mr. Gross and following that marriage, she remarried Mr. Jackson, who was her third husband. Louis knew all of them.

¹⁸ Personal communication from Grace Salomon Pick. Some members of the Salomon family carry the **Tay-Sachs** disease gene. Grace has lost several infants as a result. **Tay-Sachs** disease is genetically inherited. Children born of parents who are closely related are the most likely to be afflicted because the disease is recessive. Closely related parents may both have inherited this genetic disorder. It has been described: "...Tay-Sachs Disease, Amaurotic Family Idiocy, infantile form, commences during the first year of life, is most often confined to members of the Jewish race, and is a rapidly progressive and fatal disease. Death usually occurs within one or two years. Central nervous system symptoms and signs first appear with rapid mental deterioration, convulsions, paralyses, and soon the child becomes blind and completely paralyzed." Charelik married Marie Salomon, who was his niece (daughter of Charelik's brother, Eshlomo). They had five children, but the first three died soon after birth, the fourth child, Robert died by age one. Only their fifth child, Jack, survived to adulthood. Because of the knowledge of the **Tay-Sachs** disease in this family, it is possible that Charelik and Marie's children were afflicted, as were several children of Grace Salomon Pick.

¹⁹ Personal communication from Simon Hochschild and George Salomon with Robert Sherins in Pacific Palisades, California, on January 9, 2000.

²⁰ Robert Solomon, eldest son of Silvi and Brenda Solomon, stated in a personal communication to his brother, Victor, in 1999, "...Aaron's son drowned in Plumtree." This comment assisted us in identifying that AZ was Aaron Zalman.

of a much larger history of Jewish trading, business, and immigration to Africa.

The patron-client relationship existed for many immigrants, but it was particularly relevant to the Jews. One member of a family became established in the new land. Then he would send for younger relatives and advance them money for their fares, put up a guarantee if necessary, and offer the newcomer a job. In return, the immigrant normally agreed to pay off his debts by working for his new patron over a certain number of years. The newcomer hoped to learn the ways and language of the new country and build up the contacts and capital so that he could eventually establish himself as an independent businessman. If very fortunate, he might even become a patron. Most of the men were single, and they would have to send home for a wife. A married man tried to establish himself so that his wife and family could join him.

Jews were concentrated in commercial investments. In 1912, thirty-four percent of all retail outlets were owned by Jews. The existence of the patron-client network was very clear in the case of the mine stores, where fifty percent were controlled by Jews during the period of 1907 to 1940.

Some Jews owned gold mines prior to 1914. Such was the case at the *Old Turk Mine*.²¹ This was located in Inyathi, where Max Solomon was a storekeeper. Jewish businessmen concentrated their investments in hotels and bars. It was considered to be a lucrative method of investing funds that had been earned in their trading. By 1916, about forty percent of the liquor licenses granted in the Bulawayo district were held by Jews. Most of the Jewish immigrants, however, remained country traders or storekeepers in the African section of towns, catering to a declining African market. Often the Jews lived under very poor and unhealthy conditions.

In 1928, Wolf Ryoko, a Zionist emissary and writer, commented, “Jews came to Northern Rhodesia not for farming, but to open up trading stations. Jewish wholesalers in Bulawayo assisted their relatives and *landsleit*”²² by

²¹ In a personal communication from Louis Herscovitz on May 18, 2000, he stated that the *Turk Mine* was not the same as the mine at Lonely. They were two distinct operations. Louis had visited both mines in the past. Louis also met Mr. Salis many times when he visited Max and Jeanette at their farm on his way to the *Lonely Mine* store.

²² Countrymen.

giving them goods and oxen so that they could go to the new territory to open shops at railway stations and sidings.”

Jews were not the only pioneers in Africa.²³ They were joined by Scots, Greeks, Muslims, and Asians, who comprised the largest group.²⁴ However, Jews were an important part of these ethnic groups. Immigrants often performed the role of middlemen and entrepreneurs in frontier zones.

Jewish traders²⁵ brought with them very little capital in the form of goods or money. They had a high level of motivation derived from their status as economic and religious refugees. They had no country that would welcome their return. They brought experience and knowledge of cattle and grain farming. For a few, immigration to Africa was an escape from the restrictions of the *shtetlach* and *ghettos*.

Accounts were kept in Yiddish with no sophisticated accounting systems. They understood the difference between capital assets and net spendable income. To survive, they severely limited their consumption of goods to the bare minimum. Arthur Kaplan,²⁶ of Bulawayo, has been quoted, “...the Jews knew how to live on nothing.” The risks for loss of life and material loss were high. There were few spectacular successes. There were many more failures, bankruptcies, and deaths from malaria and suicides. However, African trading in the new territories provided a much needed opportunity for financial success.

Early settlers for the most part knew little English. They could not obtain jobs and were practically forced into the one line of business.²⁷ Reverend²⁸

²³ *Personal Memories of Southern Rhodesia*, August 29, 1998. Narrated by Jay Patel, M.D. Recorded and transcribed by Robert S. Sherins, M.D. Dr. Patel and Dr. Sherins are Ophthalmology colleagues at Saint John’s Health Center, Santa Monica, California, where they first met in 1985. Dr. Patel’s father immigrated to Southern Rhodesia from India, where he established a dry goods business in Harare and Bulawayo. The Patel’s business acquaintances included the Solomons in Salisbury (Harare) and Bulawayo.

²⁴ Especially Indians.

²⁵ Traders dealt with specific products in commercial markets, such as cattle, gold, and diamonds. The merchants settled in communities to manage their retail stores.

²⁶ Central African Zionist Organization, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

²⁷ Our Uncle Ilie Solomon, son of Saul Solomon, Pungesti, Romania, and brother of Rachmiel (Rudolph) Solomon, who later lived in Tampa, Florida, worked for a short while in Elizabethville, Belgian Congo, about 1913. The senior Ilie Salomon had begged his brother, Saul, to allow young Ilie to come to Elizabethville in order to help him in his

Moses Isaac Cohen, spokesman for the Rhodesian Jewish Community,²⁹ stated, “The Jews certainly created the *kaffir* truck business in Rhodesia. They opened their stores in every part of the country, shared in all its pioneering hardships, and helped materially to develop its commercial life.”

It would not be possible to understand the role that our Solomon ancestors played in the development of central and southern Africa without an overview of the events that took place from the late 19th Century. Charelik Salomon was perhaps the best known of our family. He was a renowned business wholesaler. Later on, he became a patron and philanthropist,³⁰ and many monuments to his generosity have been erected in Zimbabwe.

What we now know of Charelik Salomon can be summarized here. Charelik had several wholesaling trading companies, *Salomon & Stenham*,³¹ *Charelik Salomon and Co.*, *C. Salomon & Co. of Vryburg*, and *Salomon and Kaufman*. Charelik started business as *Salomon and Stenham*. Stenham lived in London where he served as shipping agent. Shipping agents arranged imports and exports, paid import and export duties, freight charges, and usually gave a guarantee for all payments due by their clients.

Just before Charelik died, however, he formed a partnership with Oscar Kaufman. The name of their business was again changed to *Salomon and Kaufman (Pvt) Ltd*. After a serious disagreement, Charelik's son, Jack Salomon, sold out to Oscar Kaufman. Apparently, Jack liquidated all of his assets in Rhodesia and sent the proceeds out of the country. Oscar Kaufman then renamed his business, *Kaufman Sons and Co. (Ltd)*.

After the rail lines were completed in 1897, all of the traders prospered in Bulawayo. At that time, Bulawayo had become the dominant center for business trading between Bulawayo and Barotseland. After the Anglo-Boer

dry goods store. Young Ilie became ill and homesick. He returned to his parents, who had immigrated to Manchester, England, by that time.

²⁸ Rabbi.

²⁹ 1929.

³⁰ He also contributed significantly to the fund for the Palestine Jewish National Home and Scholarships for eligible students at Milton School in Bulawayo.

³¹ Personal communication of Simon Hochschild and George Salomon with Robert Sherins, January 9, 2000. They stated that Oscar Steinmann later changed his name to Stenham. The company name was then changed to *C. Salomon & Co*. In 1936, Charelik merged his company with Oscar Kaufman.

Wars,³² traders were able to become independent of the Port Elizabeth merchants and appoint their own London agents. Bulawayo then became the distribution center for trading in Northern Rhodesia. However, dependency upon the South African suppliers was not fully broken until after Zambian Independence in 1960's.

Charelik was given trading rights in 1908 near the *Old Turk Mine* at Lonely.³³ He paid fifty pounds rental to the *British South Africa Company* that owned the adjacent property. His company prospered and eventually those mines and contractors employed fifty Europeans and one thousand Africans. Charelik must have had a significant business volume. Later, he sublet his stores to other Jewish businesses, among them, *Salis Bros*. Jewish storekeepers³⁴ were ubiquitous near the mines.

Fortunes were made due to the astute business operations of the Jews. Business was very lucrative for a few fortunate traders, such as Charelik. As an example, he and his wife, Marie, could afford to spend six months of the year in Europe during the years between the Boer War, 1899 - 1902, and World War I, which started in 1914.³⁵

The average Jewish storekeeper, however, lived a hand to mouth existence, working very long hours with little compensation. There were numerous insolvencies. Jewish businesses concentrated in African markets where they ran general stores. Only a few succeeded in owning retail outlets that served the European population. They lacked the financial capital to buy their stocks and supplies, or to pay the very high rents in the larger towns. They also lacked English language skills.

Charelik Salomon became one of the major financiers of the Susman brothers, Elie and Harry. The Susmans were extremely well known, trusted, and successful merchants and traders in central Africa. Their part of this history is summarized in subsequent pages. Jewish traders helped to change the business customs from a barter system to a money economy. Jews made major contributions in the economic sphere, and provided significantly for

³² 1900 and 1910.

³³ Kosmin, Barry A., *Majuta, A History of the Jewish Community of Zimbabwe*, Gwelp, 1980.

³⁴ They were known as *Majutas*.

³⁵ Excerpted from Kosmin, Barry A., *Majuta, A History of the Jewish Community of Zimbabwe*, Gwelp, 1980.

the modernization and development of both the commercial and industrial sectors of central and southern Africa.³⁶ In Rhodesia, Jews had the right to lead their own lives, which were different from the majority of the population. As a social group, they set an example for others to emulate. The old Jewish virtue of *tsedaka* (charity) was always very evident. Charelik Salomon was an outstanding example of this philanthropy.

Jews contributed significantly to the development of central Africa. A few skilled individuals achieved enormous academic success, such as Professor Michael Glefand, C.B.E., who was distinguished in tropical medicine and government service. He also taught in the University Medical School, authored books on the history of the African Shona culture, and contributed to acknowledgement of the traditional African medicine.

Elie Susman, who was a very important and respected Jewish trader, retired from Livingstone about 1931-32. When he was fifty years old, he was able to renew his friendship with an old friend, Max Sonnenberg, whom he had known in Bulawayo. Charelik Salomon was Max Sonnenberg's uncle. Max had inherited the Vryburg business that belonged to Charelik.³⁷ John Kaufman, grandson of Oscar Kaufman, reported that Charelik became mortally ill on board a ship just after the ship departed from East London, South Africa. Hazel Hochschild, daughter of Rosie Salomon Israel, remembered the day that Charelik died. She was a child vacationing with her parents in Victoria Falls when the news of his death was announced. In memoriam, the authorities closed down all railways for the day. Hazel's family traveled to Bulawayo for the funeral.

Charelik Salomon set up a scholarship fund in Bulawayo. There must have been a trust fund created in his name because awards are still being made in 1999, decades after his death.

³⁶ Kosmin, Barry A., *Majuta, A History of the Jewish Community of Zimbabwe*, Gwelo, 1980.

³⁷ Charelik died on July 7, 1931.

Early Jewish Presence in Africa

Revised by Robert S. Sherins, M.D.
Pacific Palisades, California, April 15, 2004

To better understand the history of the early Jewish presence in Africa, some key ancient events are discussed. Monotheism was thought to have been espoused by Egyptian Pharaoh Amenhotep IV. Royal priests resisted the religious changes and Amenhotep failed to impose this upon his subjects in ancient Egypt.

Moses received the Ten Commandments from G-d on Mount Sinai. Those Commandments have been linked to the one hundred twenty commandments that had been written in the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*. Moses married Ziporah,³⁸ who was the daughter of the Midian Priest, Jethro. The Midians were from an ancient Northern Arabian people. That marriage linked Moses and his children, Gershon and Eliezer, with the ancient people of Sinai.

Not all Hebrews accompanied Moses during the Exodus from Egypt. Probably only a few thousand did. Therefore, many other Hebrews remained in Egypt. At the same time, there were many Canaanites living in Palestine, who were not part of the Egyptian exodus with Moses.

Jewish settlers spread across the Nile River and into Ethiopia during the 13th century B.C.E. Some Jews remained in the region and are known as the *Falashas*³⁹ The Falashas remained in Ethiopia until recently, when they were repatriated to Israel.

After the Jewish exodus to Babylon, the First Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Assyrians. A new Synagogue was erected at Elephantine, which is located in the area of present day Aswan. Documents of ancient Jewish correspondence from the 5th Century B.C.E. have been discovered, which described events that occurred during the time that the Temple was built at Elephantine. We now have some clues about issues related to the culture and construction of that synagogue.

³⁸ Pronounced *Tsiporah*, which means *sparrow*.

³⁹ *Falasha* literally means stranger. It refers to black Ethiopian Jews, who have preserved their Jewish faith. Ethiopia was also known as the ancient community of Abyssinia.

About 300 B.C., the Bible⁴⁰ was translated into the Greek language and was referred to as the *Septuagint*.

At the time of Jesus Christ, there were about one million Jews living in Alexandria, Egypt.

The origins of the great Empire of Ghana have been attributed to Jewish refugees. By about 1000 C.E., Jews along with *Kharajite Berbers* were among the founders of *Siljimsa* at the northern terminus of the Trans-Sahara. They were known to have traded in gold from Ghana.

Jews, who lived in African Mali,⁴¹ about 1375, were known to have used maps drawn by Jews from Majorca, Spain. Later on, in the 15th Century, Spanish King Charles V expelled Jewish traders from Timbuktu. However, by 1626, Jewish traders were reestablished in the Sahara at Oran and continued to prosper there until the 19th Century.

During the Spanish Inquisition, in the 1490's, Jews immigrated to North Africa and the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Sultan Beyazet II could not understand why the Spanish and Portuguese kings deliberately forced out this large group of learned and very skilled people. Beyazet II welcomed the Jews into his empire, which included southern Europe, northern Africa and the Middle East. By the 20th Century, there were many Sephardic descendants from the Ottoman Empire, who had immigrated to the Belgian Congo and Northern Rhodesia. *Marranos*⁴² from Smyrna, Turkey, and the Island of Rhodes were called *New Christians*. Before the 1500's, many of them had settled on the Island of São Tomé, where they were able to practice Judaism.

Jews founded Luanda and Portuguese Angola by the 16th Century. Jewish astronomers understood celestial navigation, which ultimately allowed the Portuguese to sail to distant oceans south of the equator. Jews had also sailed with the Portuguese explorer Vasco de Gama. They were known to have accompanied him to India and adjacent regions.

⁴⁰ Christians refer to the Jewish Bible as the *Old Testament*.

⁴¹ Mali is located in the northwestern region of Africa, immediately south of Algeria, between Mauritania, Senegal, and Guinea to the west, and Niger to the east.

⁴² Spanish and Portuguese Jews converted to Christianity during the Inquisition were also called *Conversos*. Although Christians nominally, they were discriminated against. They continued to practice some of the Jewish customs and traditions secretly.

In South Africa, during the time that the Dutch colonized it, Jews were not permitted to settle at the Cape of Good Hope. However, it was permitted after 1795 when its occupation changed to the British authorities. In 1859, Cape Town had only six Jewish families. They were traders, not physicians or civil servants. This situation changed after 1869, when gold was discovered, and later yet when diamonds were found at Griqualand West. By 1875, the first Synagogue was built in Kimberly, which had become a diamond center. There were one hundred twenty Jewish families living in Kimberly and five hundred Jewish families in all of South Africa. The fortunes from the diamonds financed the *British South Africa Company* and enabled the British to administer the land that was to become Northern and Southern Rhodesia. England granted their administrative charters in 1889.

Cecil Rhodes, who became so preeminently associated with the mining industry in Africa, created a partnership with Alfred Beit, who was a *Converso* from Hamburg. Later, they formed a diamond monopoly with the *De Beers Consolidated Mining Company*. Lord Nathaniel Rothschild, a famous Jewish banker in London, once came to Rhodes' aid when he convinced Lord Salisbury that Cecil Rhodes had satisfactory credentials. Rhodes formed another partnership with Barney Barnato⁴³ to consolidate their diamond holdings.

Barney Barnato was originally Bernet Isaacs from London. He changed his name but always remained one of the most influential Jews in the diamond field and later in gold trading. Cecil Rhodes paid him millions to sell his holdings in the De Beers diamond mine in exchange for allowing Barnato to become a member of the Kimberly Club.⁴⁴

Nineteenth Century Jewish Settlers and Traders in Africa

⁴³ Barney Barnato was a diamond miner in Kimberly. His real name was Bernet Isaacs, from London. He had many businesses in association with his brother. As a result of frequent communications sent by his brother to indicate that Bernet should be included, too, his name was changed to *Barney Barnato*.

⁴⁴ Personal communication from Rose Norwich, November 25, 1999, in an e-mail letter to Robert S. Sherins, M.D. Rose stated, "Barney Barnato was a great hero of my husband. If you can get a copy of the 'Rhodes' series on video, you will see them all and the difficulties and conditions of mining diamonds and gold."

By Robert S. Sherins, M.D.⁴⁵
Pacific Palisades, California, April 15, 2004

In 1871, Daniel Kisch was known as the first example of a *Court Jew* in southern Africa. He was a Jewish trader who had settled in Bulawayo, which was then the Ndebele Capital. He acted as secretary to King Lobengula. Kisch was a nephew of Aaron de Pass, who had been a pioneer of the whaling and guano industries in the Cape of Good Hope, and one of the founders of the Old Synagogue⁴⁶ in Cape Town. Initially, there were only a few Jewish settlers and traders. By the 1890's, new Hebrew Congregations were established in the towns of Bulawayo⁴⁷ and Salisbury.⁴⁸ That was also the time when my Solomon ancestors from Pungesti began to arrive in Bulawayo and Elizabethville.

Early transport of materials and supplies was by steamer up the Zambezi and Shire Rivers and through Nyasaland. That provided access to the northeastern region of Rhodesia for important companies, such as the *African Lakes Corporation*, which was a Scottish company from Glasgow, and Eugene Sharrer's *Zambezi Traffic Company*, which was owned by a German Jewish entrepreneur from Hamburg. Britain encouraged Sharrer's company to compete with the Scottish Company. Sharrer went on to construct the *Shire Highlands Railway*.

By 1890 to 1900, Carl Weise, another German Jew, entered Zambia and became part of a German Jewish trading network. Weise's company was backed by Ludwig Deuss, also from Hamburg, Germany, to enter Mozambique and establish routes to the Indian Ocean. There, Deuss had his trading business established since the 1880's. Such routes opened shipping from the Mozambique coast inland to central and southern Africa. Deuss was thus able to export rubber from the Belgian Congo and Northern Rhodesia. Deuss, in turn, backed an Austrian Jewish merchant, Gustav Rabinek, in an ivory and rubber trading empire.

⁴⁵ Robert S. Sherins, M.D., author of this article, is a descendant of the same Salomon/Solomon family as Charelik Salomon, merchant in Southern Rhodesia, who was mentioned frequently in this article. Both of them descended from the same Solomon family from Negresti and Pungesti, Romania. All of the Salomon/Solomon individuals mentioned in this article are related as cousins.

⁴⁶ Founded in the 1840's.

⁴⁷ 1894.

⁴⁸ 1895.

The routes also served to make food and stores available for the workers in the inland farms and mining areas. Maurico Teixeira de Mattos, a Portuguese Jew, was involved in trading and supplying food to the *Tanganyika Concessions Company's Katanga Mines* in 1907. They were located north of Lake Nyasa. He also supplied the border areas of Belgian Congo and Angola and traded in rubber in Northern Rhodesia in 1908. He was involved in prefabricated houses in Elizabethville in 1913. Those individuals were rugged German capitalists. They played no part in the establishment of the settled Jewish Communities.

Jews from the Russian Empire and Eastern Europe settled into the western parts of Africa. Those were the immigrants who formed the basis of the future Jewish Communities. As a group, they were poor and had very limited capital to invest in their businesses. Their immigration was facilitated by access to Rhodesia. That resulted from several factors: the opening of the Victoria Falls Bridge and the railway north of the Zambezi River in 1905; and the alternative but arduous wagon routes from the south. The Russian immigrants, who went to America and Africa, had many reasons to immigrate. Among the reasons were the Assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881, the furious waves of pogroms, and the failed Russian Revolution of 1905. By 1911, there were fifty thousand Jews settled in South Africa. Most of the Jews lived in Johannesburg, and most of them were in trades.

Of the three-quarters of those Jews, who emigrated from Russia, two-thirds of them had come from the Kovno region of Lithuania. One-third of them had emigrated from the Kurland region of Latvia and Byelorussia. The overwhelming majority of Jews had come from **small shtetlach**, where they had been laborers, traders, butchers, millers, cattle traders, innkeepers, and artisans.

The immigrants from Poland, Russia, Lithuania, and Latvia did not mix. When they arrived in Africa, they were able to re-establish their former European social relationships. Most importantly, they formed the commercial intermediary group between the British ruling class and the African peasants. The Jews were not afraid to shake hands, eat, and do direct business with the black natives. Similarly, the presence of the Jews also allowed the Africans to have beneficial, yet indirect dealings with the British merchants, who did not wish to shake hands or eat with the native people.

The impoverished Lithuanian Jews were pious and devoted Biblical scholars. They arrived primarily from the Vilnius area, which was renowned for its ninety Synagogues in the city of Vilnius alone. Vilnius had the reputation of being the “Jerusalem of the North.”

In the 1890’s, Johannesburg was commercially overcrowded and competitive. That forced the newer Jewish immigrants to move to the more northern regions of Rhodesia. Life there was very difficult. The men were usually in their mid-twenties. Their life expectancy was short. Most often they died of malaria, especially the form of that disease which resulted in urinary bleeding. It was called *black water fever*, and it was their biggest danger.

There were other hazards that made the lives of those immigrants difficult. In 1896-1897, ninety percent of the cattle either died or had to be killed to rid the region from the viral *Rindepest*⁴⁹ that had created a cattle epidemic. That resulted in a severe shortage of beef livestock and oxen. By 1899, there was a renewed need for beef and draught oxen because of the demands for more food and transport placed upon the country by the effects of the Anglo-Boer War. The native kings permitted the Jews to use their tribal land for trade routes because they trusted them. Cattle trails were developed to move large herds. There was a strategic need for transporting trading goods and delivering machinery to the mines. When World War I started in 1914, there was a serious demand for the copper miners to ship their ore to the smelters. They also had to be resupplied with machinery and tools, as well as food and dry goods for the workers.

The early Jewish traders entered the region of Barotseland, north of the Zambezi River. By 1900, there were several important Jewish traders: Robert “Zambezi” Gordon, Fishel Levitz, Elie and Harry Susman, Joseph Finkelstein, Wolf Levin, Max Kominsky, Isadore Pieters, the Diamond brothers, David Werstock, Peimer brothers, and Egnatz Snapper. Jewish traders had an extraordinary hold over those trades. That resulted in the further development of anti-Semitism because the British considered the Jews to be ill fated and different. They placed them at the social level of the black Africans. Jews were considered not quite white. There were other sources of anti-Semitism due to the practices of the Jews who shook hands

⁴⁹ *Rindepest* was also called *PP disease* or *snot-sicke disease*.

and ate with the black Africans. A few intermarriages resulted in children of *mixed color*. The British tried to restrict business licenses to the Jews. However, Jews traded in areas of very high risk. A few made very high profits, but only a few were so fortunate.

Among the Jewish traders were Elie and Harry Susman, who had made long range commitments to trade, agriculture and industry. They made enormous contributions to the development of the economies of both Southern Rhodesia and South Africa. Both of them had emigrated from Ritene, Lithuania. Their father was Orthodox. Their mother had to become an innkeeper to earn enough to feed her family. Several times their father left Lithuania in search of satisfactory work. His efforts in America had failed. He tried South Africa, but was unemployed in the 1880's, after the *Rindepest* cattle epidemic. However, their father did encourage his sons to immigrate to Africa for their livelihood. Elie and Harry left home at very young ages. They sold ginger beer in train stations. By 1897, they had worked their way to Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia. In Francistown,⁵⁰ Elie became involved in cattle trades. His partner was Max Sonnenberg, who was there on the business of his uncle Charelik Salomon, who owned **C. Salomon & Co. of Vryberg.**⁵¹

By 1896 to 1901, the Susman brothers became major beef suppliers to Bulawayo and areas north of the Zambezi River. Moving the cattle over African trails was very arduous; the cattle often had to be ported over rivers and around rapids or waterfalls. Cattle trading was also a very political business. They had to obtain British permits as well as local permits from the tribal chiefs. Often the largest cattle herds were owned by the native Royal families, who had cattle posts scattered around the country. In addition, native customs of lending cattle was a common practice among the tribes under a system known as *mafisa*. It was used to cement political alliances.⁵² Native kings worked well with the Jews and thought of them as traders, rather than as Jews. The natives considered them neither colonial officials nor missionaries.

⁵⁰ Francistown is located in Bechuanaland, which is now known as Botswana.

⁵¹ Vryberg is a mining town that is located directly north of Kimberly, and southeast of Johannesburg. An important railway line was completed from the Cape of Good Hope to Johannesburg and Bulawayo that passed through Vryberg.

⁵² Even in our modern times, cattle wealth among African tribes is both essential and equivalent to our currency.

There were many dangers encountered in the cattle drives. Among them were those diseases infecting the humans, such as African sleeping sickness, borne by the tsetse fly, and malaria. However, there were also dangers for the cattle from severe weight loss after very long distance drives or from aggressive predators, such as lions, crocodiles, leopards, or groups of wild dogs.

One of the success stories about the Jewish traders involved the Susman brothers. By 1908, they had established trading stores at Lealui, Nalolo, and Sesheke, where they sold cloth, beads, blankets, and salt. They were greatly admired because they refused to sell guns or alcohol. They also served in cattle trading, grain dealing, curio selling, and transport contracting. But, as far as our particular Solomon family history is concerned, the most important aspect of the Susman's business dealings was that they obtained significant financial support from Charelik Salomon in the years 1907 to 1912.⁵³

Another significant financial contributor to the Susmans was Tom Meikle. Max Solomon, another son of our great grandfather, Schneer Zalman Solomon, owned a farm, which he called *Gabriella*. It was located about forty miles north of Bulawayo, near Meikle's *Old Turk Mine*. Max believed that there were gold deposits on his land. Meikle learned of this and wished to purchase the farm. Naturally, Max refused. A terrible rift developed between them. Depending upon which story one believes, Max sadly left the farm to establish a hotel business in Bulawayo.⁵⁴

According to Louis Herscovitz, whose mother was Dinah Solomon, daughter of Shneer Zalman Solomon, from Pungesti, Romania, there were many stories about the rift between Meikles and Max Zalman Solomon (MZ). When M.Z. went broke at the Turk Mine and his farm was sold to Meikles, M.Z. and Jeanette, his wife, built a combined store and house at the *Queens*

⁵³ Financiers included: The *Matabeleland Trading Co.*, *Landau Brothers*, Meikle Brothers, *I. Pieters*, and Charelik Salomon.

⁵⁴ It has been told that Meikle altered the course of the river above the farm. The severe drought that ensued was intolerable. Another version of the story involved rifle shootings from Meikle's men, who apparently killed [workers]. We don't believe that any significant gold ore was uncovered later at *Gabriella*. See, *Memoirs of Max Solomon's Descendants*, narrative dictated by cousin Victor Solomon, at the home of Robert and Marlene Sherins in Pacific Palisades, California, August 1, 1999. Recorded and transcribed by Robert S. Sherins, M.D.

Mine. This was built out of clay and straw, as was usual for people who had insufficient funds. Louis Herscovitz remembered working at their store and selling merchandise at their trading store in 1937 and 1938.

The Susman family became quite wealthy as a result of their astute business practices. Their cattle trading income added to the money earned from the sale of supplies, food, and goods that were sold through their stores. The Susmans understood the importance of resting their cattle on long drives. They cut some of their business losses by providing rest areas for the cattle, which reduced the weight losses of the herd. They were also regarded as being very fair in their business practices with both King Ldewanika and the whites. The Susmans were considered the best traders in the area. They also built rail lines from Livingstone, Northern Rhodesia, to Elizabethville, Belgian Congo.⁵⁵

The railways had extended to Elizabethville and into Barotseland and Bechuanaland, where beef and oxen were in high demand. By 1912, the Susmans settled in Elizabethville where they purchased the **Tambalika** butchery from Adolph Ullman. At this time, however, an epidemic of bovine pleural pneumonia developed among the herds. Huge cattle kills were ordered to try to stop the disease from spreading. Including the beasts that died from the disease, the kills accounted for a staggering ninety percent of the herds. Apparently, only the cattle hides could be salvaged for export of leather goods. Bankruptcy was expected, but the Susmans were saved by a crucial loan offered by Tom Meikle. They were then able to restart the cattle industry in Bulawayo, saving mass unemployment in the area.

Meikle built up Southern Rhodesia's biggest businesses including the most famous hotel in Salisbury. He also provided a small room in his Bulawayo store as a place for the early Jewish immigrants to conduct their religious services.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Jerry Salomon traveled by rail to and from his home in Elizabethville and Milton Middle School in Bulawayo. Jerry's Auntie Dinah [daughter of Ilie Solomon] and Samuel Herscovitz lived directly across the street from Milton Middle School. *Salomon Memoires of Elizabethville, Belgian Congo, Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia, and Pinner, United Kingdom*, dictated by Jerry Solomon. Recorded in Pinner, U.K. June 14, 1999, and transcribed by Robert S. Sherins, M.D., Pacific Palisades, California.

⁵⁶ 1895.

The Susmans helped to build the first Synagogue in Northern Rhodesia at Livingstone. Elie Susman laid the first cornerstone in 1928. He also helped to establish the fund to support Zionist contributions for the Palestine Jewish National Home in 1928.

With the advent of commercial mining in the region, it was urgent that the interconnecting rail lines be completed. Bulawayo served to distribute consigned goods from the Indian Ocean transshipped from the Mozambique coast to inland regions and onto Livingstone and Lusaka. From there supplies were transported northward to Elizabethville, Belgian Congo. Despite the complexities of this type of travel, it was a cheaper route and means of transshipment. Initially, Cecil Rhodes had intended the rail and river routes to connect the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa with Cairo. It was intended to run northward from Bulawayo to Salisbury, cross the Zambezi River at Lake Kariba near Victoria Falls⁵⁷ and terminate at the south end of Lake Tanganyika. Rail extensions had to be built to Katanga because of copper discoveries and subsequent mining operations. Rails were also needed in Wankie, by 1903; in Southern Rhodesia, to ship large coal deposits; and in 1906, at Broken Hill, where lead and zinc were being mined. Those remote commercial interests determined the rail routes north of Bulawayo. The rail lines reached Elizabethville, Belgian Congo, in 1910.

The construction of the railroads was itself a stimulus to business and trade by providing a means for passenger travel. Jewish traders often preceded the completion of the rail lines and provided cattle, oxen, *nsima*,⁵⁸ and goods, for both the contractors and the rail workers. They also provided similar supplies for the mines.

Jewish traders were among the first to settle and establish communities. Jews were not the first African traders. Native suppliers, including the Ovimbundu, the Bisa, and the Yao had preceded them. By the 1930's, Jewish traders began to have competition from Asian shops and later from native hawkers. Those events forced the Jewish businessmen to seek management positions and more dynamic sectors of the economy. A succession of other ethnic groups replaced each other in the specialized commercial activities of Africa.

⁵⁷ Completed in 1905.

⁵⁸ Maize, corn.

There were other Jewish developments in central and southern Africa. Several are listed:

- Jewish Congregation at Kimberly established in 1871.
- Jews were among the first white settlers extending north of the Limpopo River and from Bulawayo in the 1870's –1880's. They followed the Missionary Road that later became the railway line from the Cape of Good Hope to Victoria Falls. It passed through Kimberly, Vryberg, Mafeking, Botswana and on to Bulawayo.
- Alfred Rosenthal, who owned the Commercial Hotel in Salisbury, performed an important public service by establishing the first brewery in 1898, which cost 12,000 pounds. He obtained the services of a brewer specially imported from Berlin.
- The first mayor of Bulawayo was Viennese-born, I. Hirschler.
- Bulawayo's Hebrew Congregation was established in August 1894. The first wedding was celebrated there in December 1894.
- Bulawayo's first *mohel* was C. Friedlander, who was appointed in 1896.⁵⁹
- Bulawayo's first Hebrew teacher, Miss Lowenstart, was appointed in 1898.
- Bulawayo's matzo was first baked for Passover by Napoleon Boas in 1898.
- Gold was discovered in the Eastern Transvaal at Barberton in 1883 and on the *Witwatersrand* in 1885. Jews numbered about 10% of the *Uitlanders*.⁶⁰
- Johannesburg was declared as a town in 1887. That year, the Johannesburg Hebrew Congregation was formed.
- Cecil Rhodes had many Jewish partners: Bernard (Isaacs) Bernato, who formed a diamond mining company and eventually sold it to *De Beers Mining Co.*; and Alfred Beit and Lippert of the famous *Lippert Concession*. Most importantly, in the Cape Colony and Rhodesia, Rhodes was able to offer to the oppressed Jews of Europe, who chose to immigrate there, full civil rights, which had been denied to them in Russia, Romania, and Eastern and Central Europe. Rhodes stated, "In

⁵⁹ Personal communication from Rose Norwich, Johannesburg, South Africa. She stated that there was a deep division between Zimbabwean Jewry, who were Sephardi, versus Ashkenazi. They had their own synagogues and their own *mohels*. Her husband had been a Sephardi *mohel* in the mid 1930's until he left to go overseas to qualify as a surgeon in Edinburgh. There were no facilities then in Africa for doctors to become specialists as there is today.

⁶⁰ *Uitlanders* is an Afrikaans term for foreigners.

building up this country, we must have a haven for Jews; they are constructive, far-seeing, and persistent.”

- Jewish publications reflected the matter about seeking Jews to immigrate to Africa. *The London Jewish Chronicle*, in 1893, printed “an appeal is made by a Salisbury resident...to...Jewish brethren who want to better themselves by coming to a new country...a call directly for any capitalists, mechanics, and tradesmen who were willing to work hard.” The support of ordinary traders and speculators was as important as the investments of wealthy individuals, such as the Rothschilds.
- Bulawayo’s first doctor and Medical Officer to the Bulawayo Field Force was Goodman Levy.
- Jews fought in African wars with valor. There had been a general opinion that Jews were cowards and would not fight for their country. Jewish military participants were significant in Africa. This was a vastly different situation than had existed in Russia under Czarist times, or in Romania, where they were oppressed and could be conscripted for a period of up to twenty-five years.

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Dear cousins,

Excerpts from this accounting of Jewish trading in central Africa have emphasized certain aspects of the recorded history, in particular, the history of the lives of the most successful businessmen. We have excerpted information discovered in our research, but in no way has there been any deliberate intention to diminish the stories of the other Solomon family members, who devoted their lives to their particular work and families. Footnotes have been provided to explain or emphasize certain details of the history. The equally important stories of our other African Solomon ancestors will be included in other narratives, which have been dictated for publication of our family history.

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With my fondest affection and love for each of you,

Robert