

AN AMERICAN JEWISH STORY IN HONOR OF MY PARENTS' TRIPLE SIMCHA

by Robert Lehman, M.D.

Our family recently celebrated the 95th birthday of my father, Mr. Merrill B. Lehman; the 90th birthday of my mother, Mrs. Nanette Lehman; and my parents' 70th wedding anniversary. This triple family *simcha* provides an opportunity to reflect on the path of Orthodox Judaism in America over the past 175 years and, particularly, the perseverance of Orthodox Judaism in Baltimore.

My family's history in America started nearly 175 years ago with the migration of my great-great-great-grandparents, the Bergman and Gundersheimer families, on my father's side, and the Sycle and Bear families, on my mother's side, to

Richmond, Virginia, from Bavaria, in the early 1830s. They were part of a wave of emigration from Germany in the wake of riots and oppressive edicts – one famous edict decreed that only one son of Jewish families could marry – that reversed many of the advances in civil rights, citizenship, equal treatment, and economic opportunities that the Jews had recently attained as a result of Napoleon's Emancipation.

In Richmond, the first Jewish immigrants were Sefardic and settled in the city in the late 1700s. The first shul was Sefardic. The German Jews who came after them formed their own shul, and soon became the dominant community. The Sefardic and German synagogues merged in the early 19th century to become Beth

Ahaba Congregation, now known as Temple Beth Ahaba. The *nusach* of this new congregation was the German Ashkenaz rite.

The survival of traditional Judaism was clearly a challenge in America. There were no rabbis, the level of learning was marginal, and *shechita* and *kashrus* were difficult. All this led to the dissipating of the traditions among the new immigrants. Additionally, the influence of the Reform movement quickly moved from Germany to the United States. The Reform movement, which started in the early 19th century, brought about an incredibly rapid and devastating decline in traditional Jewish life in Germany and central Europe. It was another result of the emancipation, which gave the Jews more freedom but also ignited their desire to be indistinguishable from their non-Jewish countryman.

Although Beth Ahaba continued as an Orthodox synagogue, the pressure for Reform and change was growing. It was into this environment that my great-great grandfather, Jacob Gundersheimer, was

born. As an adult, Jacob Gundersheimer owned a confectionery store and became president of Beth Ahaba. It was the late 1860s, the post-Civil War era, and the rumblings of Reform were rampant in the shul.

Immediately after the bar mitzva of his son, Philip William (P.W.) Gundersheimer, Jacob Gundersheimer saw the handwriting on the wall, and realized that he would not be able to prevent the abandonment of the traditional rite in the shul. He sent his son, P.W. to live with the Jacob Cohn family in Baltimore. The Cohns had migrated to Baltimore in the early 1860s. Jacob Gundersheimer wanted his son to be raised in the traditional home of Jacob Cohn in order to continue his traditional Jewish education and observance. The descendants of the Jacob Cohn family in Baltimore are represented by Jeffrey Cohn, Nancy Broth, and Rona Lerner, who lives in Silver Spring.



Meanwhile, my mother's family, the Strausses, migrated to the United States from Frankfurt in the mid-1800s.

Establishing themselves in Baltimore, they owned a dry goods business, Strauss Brothers. The family maintained the *minhag* Ashkenaz ritual in a country and a city that were not conducive to the preservation of halachic-based Jewish practice. Baltimore was no different than Richmond; the pressure for assimilation and abandoning ritual was very strong.

The first chartered Jewish congregation in Maryland was established in 1830, and was known as Nidchei Israel. Though founded earlier by Portuguese/Dutch Jews from the West Indies, the subsequent members of Nidchei Israel were of German Jewish origin. They met at various locations around Fells Point until they constructed a synagogue, in 1845, which exists to this day and is known as the Lloyd Street Synagogue, which is today part of the current Jewish Museum of Baltimore.

In 1840, Nidchei Israel hired the first ordained rabbi in the United States. Rabbi Abraham Rice, born in Bavaria, learned in the Yeshiva of Furth, Germany, where he received *smicha* from Rabbi Wolf

Hamburger. He had also learned under Rabbi Abraham Bing, Chief Rabbi of Wurzburg, who had learned under Rabbi Nosson Adler of Frankfurt and the Chasam Sofer of Frankfurt (later of Pressburg). He was encouraged by his Rosh Yeshiva to go to the new country to establish and preserve traditional Judaism.

In 1845, Nidchei Israel became known as the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation but remained Orthodox. Just three years earlier, in 1842, Har Sinai Verein was established as an alternative to the Orthodoxy of Nidchei Israel (Baltimore Hebrew), and was the first Reform congregation established in the United States. Har Sinai is now located in Owings Mills.

Rabbi Rice spent a short time in Newport, Rhode Island, and New York before being offered the pulpit in Baltimore. He remained with Nidchei Israel until 1849, at which time he became disenchanted with the pressures for reform, and resigned. He wrote to his Rosh Yeshiva in Furth that "the religious life in this land is on the lowest level. Most people eat foul

food and desecrate the Sabbath in public.”

From the 1851 to 1862, Rabbi Rice owned a small grocery store to support his family and was the spiritual leader of a small congregation located at Howard and Lexington Streets. This congregation called itself Shearith Israel; it was one of two congregations which ultimately united to form the current Shearith Israel, Rabbi Hopfer’s shul on Glen Avenue.

The year 1879 is recognized as the onset of Shearith Israel, but we see that its roots can be traced to the small shul that Rabbi Rice formed after leaving Nidchei Israel. It is probably from this early influence of Rabbi Rice that many of the *min-hagim* of Shearith Israel, prior to the recent change from Minhag Ashkenaz, were from Furth, rather than Frankfurt.

Nidchei Israel reengaged Rabbi Rice in 1861 after assuring him of continued strict adherence to Orthodoxy. Unfortunately, Rabbi Rice died soon after this return. The 150th anniversary of his death will be 5 Cheshvan, 5772, corresponding to November 2, 2011. This true heroic pio-

neer from Germany is buried in the old Baltimore Hebrew Cemetery on Belair Road, just north of North Avenue.

Baltimore Hebrew Congregation officially joined the Reform movement in 1871. (It is located, today, on Park Heights and Slade Avenues.) As a consequence, a group headed by the Friedenwald family broke off and formed the Orthodox congregation, Chizuk Amuno. Chizuk Amuno later became a founding congregation of the emerging Conservative movement. It is now located on Stevenson Road.



It was in the early formative years of Shearith Israel Congregation that the Strauss family came to Baltimore, in the 1850s. In 1879, Shearith Israel obtained a former Methodist church at the corner of Greene and German (currently Redwood) Streets, and converted it to a shul, which included a mikvah. Among the members who purchased the new building were my great-great-grandfather, Jacob Gundersheimer, another relative, Joseph Bergman, and the Strauss brothers: Lewis,

Abraham, Eliezer, and Moses. Eliezer Strauss was my mother’s grandfather. Moses Strauss served as president of the shul for 25 years until he died in 1905. The shul rigidly adhered to the German *min-hag*, and only allowed voting rights to members who were Sabbath observant.

In 1892, contact was made with Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer of the Rabbiner Seminary in Berlin seeking a suitable candidate to be rabbi of the congregation. A letter was also sent to Rabbi Dr. Philip Hillel Klein, already a rabbi in New York but previously a successful rabbi in Germany. Both Rabbi Hildesheimer and Rabbi Dr. Klein suggested Rabbi Dr. Schepschel Schaffer, who was a graduate of the Rabbiner Seminary. Rabbi Dr. Schaffer came to Baltimore in 1892, and continued to serve as Rabbi until 1928 and as Rabbi Emeritus until his death in 1933. Rabbi Dr. Schaffer was an early Zionist, who represented the United States at the first and fifth World Zionist Congresses in Basle, Switzerland in 1897 and 1901.

At the time Rabbi Dr. Schaffer came to Baltimore, the immigrants from the Eastern European communities were arriving in vast numbers. They settled mostly in East Baltimore, establishing large and vibrant congregations that were successful in transferring the high levels of Torah learning from the centers in Eastern Europe. It was difficult to perpetuate the learning on to the next generation, as the younger generation could not relate to their parents' old-fashioned Orthodoxy. Still, this East European migration was a major influence in the ultimate preservation and growth of Orthodox Jewry in Baltimore and the United States.

As the Eastern European Jews moved into Baltimore, the German Jews began to move northward to the Eutaw Place neighborhood. The shul decided to follow the migration of its constituents, and under the leadership of Moses Strauss, Shearith Israel constructed a new building on McCulloh Street, just south of North Avenue. The new building was opened in 1903 and included a most modern and

beautiful mikvah. The building is still standing and is used as a Masonic Temple. This is probably the only shul of its era that was not sold to a church. I will relate some details about this later. Soon after the dedication of the building, the long-standing president, Moses Strauss, died and he was succeeded by his nephew, Manes Strauss, who served as president until 1930.



In the period when my parents were born (my father in 1916, and my mother in 1921), there was another small migration northward, with families moving to the "country," what is now known as Upper Park Heights. Among the first families of the suburban branch of Shearith Israel were the Strauss brothers, including Oscar Strauss, my mother's father. Under the leadership of my mother's uncle, Manes Strauss, the shul purchased land at the corner of Park Heights and Glen Avenues, in 1923, and dedicated the new building in 1925. The congregants living in the area met at the home of Sylvan Senkar on Menlo Drive and then in the home of

Samuel Rauneker, also on Menlo.

Soon after the building was constructed, my father's grandfather, P.W. Gundersheimer, also moved to the neighborhood, and purchased the large house on Glen Avenue directly across the street from the present parking lot of Shearith Israel. Two generations, including my father, lived in this house. Later, my father's parents, the Lehmans, moved back to the McCulloh Street area, where my grandfather, J. Morton Lehman, was the last president of the McCulloch Street shul. When it became clear that a minyan could no longer be preserved, J. Morton Lehman executed a contract of sale for the building, which included a clause that the building could never be used as a church. The sale of the building was at a much lower price than could have been realized if the building had been sold to a church. Proceeds from the sale went to various charities, but the largest donation went to the support of the construction of the "new" Rogers Avenue mikvah. My grandparents planned to move back to Upper Park Heights, but

unfortunately, my grandmother passed away. My grandfather lived with my uncle on Strathmore Avenue until he died, in 1967.



My mother's father, Oscar Strauss, had met his wife while traveling the East Coast selling dry goods and the products of his company. Frequently in Richmond, Virginia, he was introduced to my grandmother, Rita Bear, whose family were members of the Reform Temple, Beth Ahaba, which was mentioned earlier. The wedding took place at the Jefferson Hotel in Richmond, which is now a national landmark and completely renovated. The caterer traveled to Richmond from Baltimore on the train in order to provide for a kosher wedding.

Rita and Oscar Strauss made their home in Baltimore and joined Shearith Israel, of course, where my grandfather taught all the bar mitzva boys the *parsha* until his untimely death at the age of 52, in 1936. My mother recalls walking to shul with her father from the Strauss home, on

the northern side of Fords Lane at the end of the trolley line, to Glen Avenue. Mr. Ben Adler recently related to me that Oscar Strauss would daven *Kabbalas Shabbos* each week, and had a beautiful voice – although he also mentioned that the younger children were impatient with his lengthy *Kabbalas Shabbos*.

As an adolescent and young adult, I was always amazed at my grandmother's dedication to Shearith Israel and the old *minhagim*. I was even more amazed at her lack of tolerance of the non-religious, especially since she enjoyed telling stories about attending "finishing school" in New York after graduating high school and enjoying a milkshake on Yom Kippur! Once in Baltimore, however, she became engaged in all the social activities of the *Kehila*, and was famous for her cross-stitched tablecloths that were auctioned off at the annual sisterhood banquet.

After my mother's father, Oscar Strauss, passed away, my grandmother married Mr. William Flehinger, who was born in Germany. My grandmother moved from

Fords Lane to Calloway Avenue in Forest Park. Mr. Flehinger had a mikvah built in his home to provide for the needs of the community and the growing yeshiva in Forest Park.



After Rabbi Dr. Schaffer retired, and then passed away, the shul remained without a rabbi. Part of the reason for this was the reemerging conflict over whether voting membership should be allowed only if the member was *shomer Shabbos*. An unwritten tenet of the congregation allowed a change in this stipulation by the rabbi of the congregation alone. In the absence of a rabbi, this rule could not be changed, which allowed the congregation to avoid the conflict and preserve strict adherence to the Orthodox German ritual.

Eventually, through the efforts of Nathan Adler (father of Ben Adler and grandfather of Nathan Adler), Rabbi Shimon Schwab was selected as the new Rabbi in 1936. Rabbi Schwab was born in Frankfurt, was educated in the Hirschian *Kehila*, and learned in Telshe and the Mir

in Eastern Europe. Rabbi Schwab was serving as Rabbi in Inchenausen, Germany, but the security and survival of the entire German Jewish community was being threatened by Nazi terrorism. Immediately after Rabbi Schwab's arrival, the conflict of voting membership was brought up, and Rabbi Schwab was steadfast in maintaining that voting members must be *shomer Shabbos*. Since the suburban branch of Shearith Israel at Glen Avenue was the only shul in Upper Park Heights, the confrontation over membership led to a split and the formation of Beth Jacob Congregation (in the building recently used by Bnos Yisroel). Interestingly, the first Rabbi of Beth Jacob was Rabbi Bernard Lander (later founder of Touro College), who maintained a very close relationship with Rabbi Schwab.



I have reviewed this history so that readers will understand the environment in which my parents were nurtured, one that became the model not only for them, their parents, and grandparents but also

for their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. My parents were raised in a community where the level of learning was fairly unsophisticated. The higher levels of learning that existed in Baltimore were mostly in East Baltimore among the Eastern Europeans who came after the late 1880s. The German Jews, by contrast, depended much more on the *Kehila* and on their adherence to ritual in their attempt to hold on to their religiosity.

The drive to assimilate was powerful. My parents' relatives, friends, and peers were members of the very large Reform German Jewish congregations and were striving for education, advancement, and wealth. In the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, the wealthy German Jews were members of the Suburban Club, which practiced the exclusivity that was of the exact nature that the German Jews were subjected to in being excluded from non-Jewish country clubs. The Suburban Club allowed only German Jews to join, forcing the emerging wealthy non-German Jews to form their own club, the Woodholme Country Club.

The wealthy German Jews sent their children to the almost exclusively German Jewish private school, the Park School. My mother, along with her siblings and cousins, attended Park School from kindergarten through graduation. Adherence to Orthodox Jewish life was certainly constantly challenged in settings like the Suburban Club and Park School. In addition, the children were surrounded by their Reform German Jewish relatives. In this atmosphere, it was only through the centrality of the *Kehila* that my parents developed the traits that allowed them to maintain the connection to Orthodox Judaism.

The general failure of most families to maintain that connection had an exception in the person of my grandmother, Rena. Her parents, P.W. and Carrie Gundersheimer, raised all nine of their surviving children in the atmosphere of the Shearith Israel *Kehila*. Although the children were influenced by the McCulloh Street Synagogue and the Glen Avenue
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Synagogue, they were raised without high levels of Torah learning. Although Talmudical Academy already existed in East Baltimore, day schools were not a choice within the German community. Of the nine children of P.W. and Carrie Gundersheimer, the only *shomer Shabbos* descendents come from my grandmother, Rena Gundersheimer Lehman – and only from two of her four children! Looking at the relatives of my children’s generation, today, most are married to non-Jewish spouses. An absolute failure, in spite of the small strand of success!

I sometimes wonder if this failure was because the beauty of the *Kehila* of Rav Hirsch in Frankfurt was not transmitted to the United States until the arrival of Rav Schwab in Baltimore and Rav Breuer in Washington Heights. Rabbi S. R. Hirsch had assumed leadership of the very small, traditional Frankfurt community in 1851, and rebuilt the Orthodox community based on the centrality of the community, the *Kehila*, and the concept of *Torah Im*

Derech Eretz. Along with Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer, Rabbi Hirsch reestablished a growing and dynamic Orthodox community in Germany. In addition to *shechita*, *chevra kadisha*, and *kashrus* supervision, there were social organizations and, especially, expanded learning opportunities, with schools run by the *Kehila* and Rav Hirsch.

Before Rabbi Schwab, the atmosphere was one of mere survival. (To demonstrate the flavor of things prior to Rabbi Schwab’s arrival, consider the invitation Mr. Kenneth Lasson recently showed me to one of the annual Shearith Israel New Year’s dances.) While the *Kehila* maintained the centrality of the rabbi, as well as *kashrus*, proper burial, and mikvah, religious education was relegated to what the shul and families could provide. For example, my mother’s education consisted of Hebrew lessons given several times a week by Mr. Leon Rifkin, in the late afternoon, after he finished teaching in public school. Mr. Rifkin was a member of Shearith Israel, and came to the Fords Lane home several times a

week to give lessons to my mother and her two sisters.

Shearith Israel did have an afternoon Hebrew school for a time, whose principal was Mr. Rifkin. But in contrast to the thriving *Torah Im Derech Eretz* model in Frankfurt, the model in Shearith Israel very strongly emphasized *derech eretz* in the sense of simply carrying on a religious way of life from generation to generation. It was not until the arrival of Rav Schwab and of Rav Rudermann and his Ner Israel yeshiva, as well as the expansion of the Talmudical Academy and the opening of Bais Yaakov (spearheaded by Mr. Henry P. Cohen from the Cohn family mentioned above) that Orthodoxy in Baltimore was infused with greater vitality. Indeed, it was the influence of the massive Eastern European migration, with its culture of high level of Torah learning that led to the growth of these institutions and the subsequent growth of the entire Jewish community of Baltimore.



My parents’ *shidduch* was the old-fashioned boy-meets-girl-in-shul-and-get-mar-

ried story. This was a Shearith Israel *shid-duch*. Throughout my childhood and adolescence, everything centered around the shul. Our friends and family were members. Although Rabbi Schwab moved to Washington Heights in 1958, I have vivid memories of my father's close friendship and relationship with him. I remember frequently waiting outside the office next to the stage in the vestry room, as my father would meet with Rabbi Schwab on Sunday mornings after *minyan* and breakfast, provided by the *shammes*, Mr. Herman. The same closeness was established when Rabbi Mendel Feldman came to the shul.

Chesed and community service were a priority at home. My father served as an officer of the shul, as well as president of the PTA at Talmudical Academy, and was always involved in a variety of community projects. His work, too, allowed him constant involvement in the *Kehila* of the shul and the broader community. This warrants another interesting story. Sometime before the war, my father applied for a new job at Sherwood Press. The owner, Mr. Harry

Hoffenberg, was impressed. When my father proceeded to bring up not being able to work on Shabbos, Mr. Hoffenberg readily agreed. It turned out that he had grown up in a *frum* home but had moved away from his roots. Still, he had very strong feelings about my father following the right path, such that not working on Shabbos was accepted. Later, at my bar mitzva, "Uncle Harry" wrote me a note that I still have, telling me to continue to follow in the footsteps of my parents and not to make the mistake that he made. Although never again observant, "Uncle Harry" and his brother always davened at Shearith Israel for the High Holidays. Eventually, my father became owner of the business, until he retired at age 68.

The business served as yet another conduit to do *chesed*. Sherwood Press printed all the banquet journals for the shul, Bais Yaakov, Talmudical Academy, and Ner Israel. And, for as many years as I can remember, all the *benchers* at these and other occasions were donated by Mr. and Mrs. Henry P. Cohn in memory of their son

Robert Guth Cohen. He was tragically killed on Rosh Hashanah, having been struck by a tree in a terrible thunderstorm near the McCulloh Street shul.

Meanwhile, my mother was active in the ladies auxiliary of the shul and Bais Yaakov. She usually wrote the plays that were put on by these organizations. She and her two sisters, Carolyn Rubinstein Froehlich and Harriett Macklin, were extremely close to each other and dedicated to my grandmother, Rita Strauss Flehinger. My mother drove Meals on Wheels for many years. She was always loyal and caring. We would be taken to visit her elderly maids from childhood for Christmas and birthdays, and the maid in our home was more like a sister to my mother than an employee.

The war was another life-altering event in my parents' lives. My father enlisted in the Army Officer Training School just prior to being drafted in 1941. He went to Navigation School, graduated first in his class, and was selected to become a flight navigator instructor. For the duration of

the war, my parents remained in Baton Rouge. My great-grandfather would send them meats on the train, as nothing kosher was available in Louisiana. My father would also set up training flights to Baltimore to visit family.



After my parents moved farther away from the shul on Glen Avenue, they continued to walk to the shul until the *nusach* changed from *minhag Ashkenaz*. As the walk was getting more difficult, they joined Shaarei Zion, and my father developed a close relationship with Rabbi Joshua Shapiro and with Rabbi Moshe Hauer. (The reason for the demise of the *minhag Ashkenaz* at Shearith Israel was that, as the children of the members of my generation attended the day schools and yeshivas, particularly the Ner Israel Yeshiva, the importance and centrality of the previously revered *minhagim* began to wane.)

Soon after the arrival of Rabbi Zvi Weiss at Shaarei Zion, my father began learning Daf Yomi for the first time, at the beginning of the cycle. This learning continued with

Rabbi Hauer's arrival and upon the merger of Bnai Jacob and Shaarei Zion. A highlight for our family was attending the last *siyum Daf Yomi* at Madison Square Garden with my father, my brother Philip, and my brother-in-law, Barry Starr.



Several poignant stories reflect qualities of *zechus avos* (ancestral merit), and demonstrate the previous generations' dedication to the *Kehila* and to maintaining Orthodox Jewish life. This dedication allowed these generations to literally "hang on" until Torah learning became much stronger in Baltimore and at Shearith Israel.

I have been told by several sources that my great-grandfather, P. W. Gundersheimer, sponsored Rav Mordechai Gifter, Rav Avigdor Miller, and Rav Paperman, three Baltimore boys, to go study at the Mir and at Telshe, in the mid-1930s. In 1976, my wife and I were in Kiryat Telshe Stone visiting my wife's cousin, Shmuel Blumert. While davening Mincha, a gentleman in the shul asked me my name and where I

was from. At that point, he asked me if I was related to Mr. Gundersheimer from Baltimore. This man turned out to be Rav Paperman, and he related to me how my great-grandfather had sponsored the three young men to learn in the great yeshivas Europe.

More recently, my first cousin, Rabbi Yonason Hirtz, attended the *sheva brachos* of his oldest son and spoke about *zechus avos* as related through this story. Rav Nosson Scherman, the editor of ArtScroll, was in attendance. He related that in 1976 he ended up learning for a two-year period in Telshe Stone, and had the opportunity throughout this period to be a *chavrusa* with Rav Gifter. He clearly recollected one day sitting together with Rav Gifter and Rav Paperman as they were shmoozing about the past, and were talking about Mr. Gundersheimer's sending them to Europe. As Rav Scherman tells it, he remembered the story, because Gundersheimer was a somewhat unusual name.

A second story about P. W. Gundersheimer is even more serendipi-

tous. About 30 years ago, I saw an elderly woman in my office for a psychiatric evaluation. When she walked in, she asked me if I was related to the Mr. Lehman from the Oriole Department Store. When I confirmed that this was my grandfather, she told this story: After high school graduation, she went to work as a clerk at the Oriole Department Store. At that time, it was owned by my great-grandfather, P.W. Gundersheimer. His son-in-law, my grandfather, J. Morton Lehman, was an attorney for the store and also ran the furniture department. This woman talked about how the department store was closed on the Sabbath. She said that all of the other Jewish-owned department stores, such as Hutzler's and Hochschild Kohn (some of the Kohns were Shearith Israel members) were open on the Sabbath. This woman described herself as a Reform, nonobservant woman. As my great-grandfather got older, she said, he turned over the day-to-day operation of the store to his son, Michael Gundersheimer. Several years later, Michael deemed it necessary to open

the store on the Sabbath. She told me that my great-grandfather completely divested any interest in the store after it was opened on the Sabbath. The store went bankrupt and closed several years later. My great-grandfather must have had a remarkable influence on this woman, as she felt that the reason the store went bankrupt was because Michael Gundersheimer didn't respect the ways of his father and opened the store on the Sabbath.



I reflected earlier about the high risk of abandoning a Torah way of life and the very high rate of attrition in those families that have been in this country for 150 or more years. In my parents' family, the thin strands of the *mesorah* (tradition) have blossomed. My father often says, "We didn't come from rabbis, but rabbis come from us." In fact, every one of my parents' grandchildren and great-grandchildren have not only remained *frum* but have shown tremendous growth in their Torah and *middos*. Among my parents' grandsons, three have *smicha*, one is learning full time

in Beitar Illit in Israel, one is in part-time kollel in Jerusalem, one is the Rabbi of the Young Israel in Atlanta, and one is *mashgiach* at a girls seminary in Jerusalem. The mushrooming growth of the grandchild generation in Torah will hopefully be carried on in the next generation among my parents' many great-grandchildren.

I have tried to relate this story of the transmission of the *mesorah* as it is interwoven in the history of two families that arrived on the east coast of the United States before the 1850s. This history is now something to reflect on, as my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Merrill B. Lehman, recently celebrated the 95th birthday of my father on, March 10, 2011, the 90th birthday of my mother, on April 27, 2011, and their 70th anniversary celebration, on May 29, 2011.

May Hashem bless Merrill and Nanette Lehman with continued good health and strength to be able to witness the continued growth of their family, and may they continue to grow in Torah and *middos*, until 120.◆