

Zendel Family History

by Allan Zendel

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My father Sol Zendel left Russia as a child, but his father Jacob and several siblings stayed. Until two years ago, I was neither aware of how my grandfather died nor of the existence of my first cousins. With the help of Yad Vashem, my wife and I were able to meet my newly discovered cousins in Israel. Here is the story:

My understanding of the family starts with my great-grandfather Abraham Zendel, who came from Byerazino. Abraham was a shoemaker and had eight children - five sons and three daughters - from what I think were two wives. I am not sure of the names of the wives, although the maiden name of one may have been Katz. The five sons were Jacob (known in Yiddish as Yankel and in Hebrew as Yisroel Yakov), Samuel, Simon, Harry, and Szaya (also known as Solomon). One of the daughters was Lillian, and the names of the other daughters are unknown to me. I am not sure why, but my father spent some of his early years living with his grandfather Abraham (my great-grandfather) and Abraham's youngest son Szaya.



Abraham Zendel, a shoemaker from Byerazino

Harry, Simon, Samuel, and Lillian all migrated to the United States during the latter part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century. Their brother Jacob - my grandfather - stayed in Byerazino. I am not aware of what happened to the other girls.



Sol Zendel, outstanding student

In the latter part of 1922, at age 9, my father Sol came to United States to stay with his uncle Simon Zendel in Mt. Vernon New York. When he began elementary school there, he didn't speak a word of English. Six months later, my great-grandfather Abraham and Szaya also emigrated. Abraham settled Washington DC, where his niece Lena lived with her husband Harry Chidekal. Shortly thereafter, my father came to live with his grandfather and the Chidekals, to continue his schooling. Sol became an outstanding student, recognized in

<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Byerazino/>
the Washington Star newspaper in 1927, having graduated Junior High with a 97% average.

A year later, his grandfather Abraham also appeared in the newspaper. Abraham was a widower twice over when, in 1928, Harry's father introduced him to Mrs. Jane Kosovsky. A month later, a photo and news of their wedding appeared in the Washington Post in an article titled "Immigrants in Life's Evening Wed, Each for the Third Time."

My grandfather Jacob Zendel followed his father's trade as a shoemaker in Byerazino. He had four children, possibly with two different wives. The four children were Leib, Benjamin, my father Sol, and a daughter whose name is unknown to me. I hope that maybe someone reading this story can help us recover her name, as well as the names of her husband and children.



Yankel (Jacob) Zendel and wife Raisa

Among his possessions, my father Sol had only two family photos.

One was this photo of his father Jacob and his wife (left).

On the reverse side of the photo (below) was a note in Russian that, until recently, we could not translate.

Заручо на Завли берни
налит талу што из
вае научит от нас
Янкел и
Райса Зендел
прошу отсет ёкору



Jacob Zendel with his daughter, son-in-law, and grandchild

The second photo my father had (above) showed three adults and a child. We thought they might be my grandfather, his daughter (the one whose name we don't know), her husband and child. But at that point, that was about all we could figure out.

My wife and I tried various genealogical services, but were never successful in finding any new family information. In the latter part of 2013, my wife entered the name Zendel and the town "Berezin" into the Yad Vashem database, and came across the testimonials of the deaths of a number of members of the Zendel family. When I was called to her computer display to see the testimonial of the death of Jacob Zendel, my jaw dropped, as I instantly recognized the face. Jacob's face exactly matched the face on the picture that my father had among his possessions. Additionally, the testimonial for Jacob's wife also matched the picture my father had. An additional testimonial for a young woman matched the picture of my father's sister. We then knew for certain, for the first time, that my grandfather, his wife, a daughter, and three of the daughter's children were all killed in 1941.

The original testimonials are all in Russian, but the Yad Vashem database has an English translation saying that Jacob's granddaughter, Maya submitted the testimonials. Maya had the same picture of our grandfather and his wife that was in my father's possession. This picture had been cut in half with each half added to the testimonial of for Jacob and his wife. The original entry on the Yad Vashem web site showed the wife's name as unknown.

<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Byerazino/>

I sent an e-mail to Yad Vashem with a copy of the picture and the note on the back of the picture. They translated the note, which said "greetings from Yankel Zendel and Raisa" and so we were able to add Raisa's name to the Yad Vashem testimonial for Jacob's wife.

I then wrote to Yad Vashem again. In this second e-mail I asked Yad Vashem to send my contact information to Maya. In response, Yad Vashem contacted both Maya and her brother Yakov and gave me Yakov's e-mail address. I then wrote Yakov, attaching a copy of the picture and note that were originally in my father's possession.

On January 1, 2014 I received an e-mail from Yakov saying, "Yes we are related!" He sent me three pictures, and it turned out that one of them matched the photo my father had (above), showing his sister, her husband and child with my grandfather Jacob. Another was a picture of my father's three siblings (below): his brother Benjamin, the sister (whose name we don't know), and his brother Leib (Yakov's father).



Benjamin Zendel, unidentified sister, and Leib Zendel



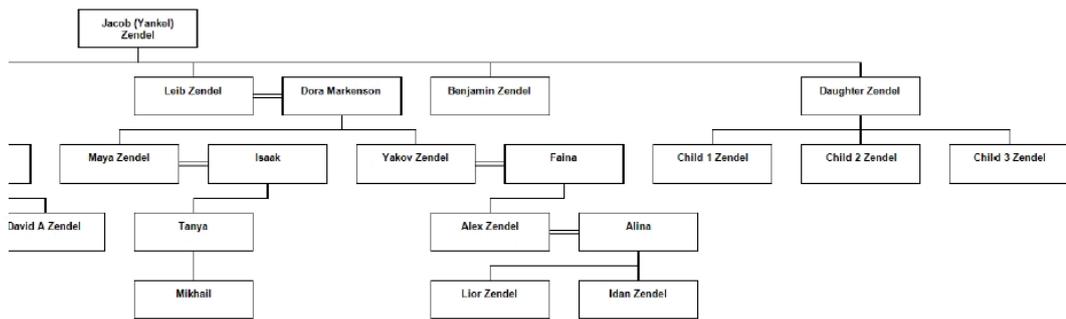
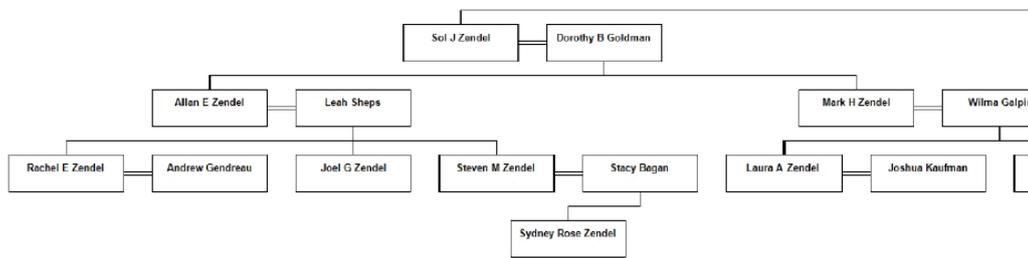
The last of the three photos Yakov sent (above) shows the sister and her three children, all of whom died in the Holocaust.

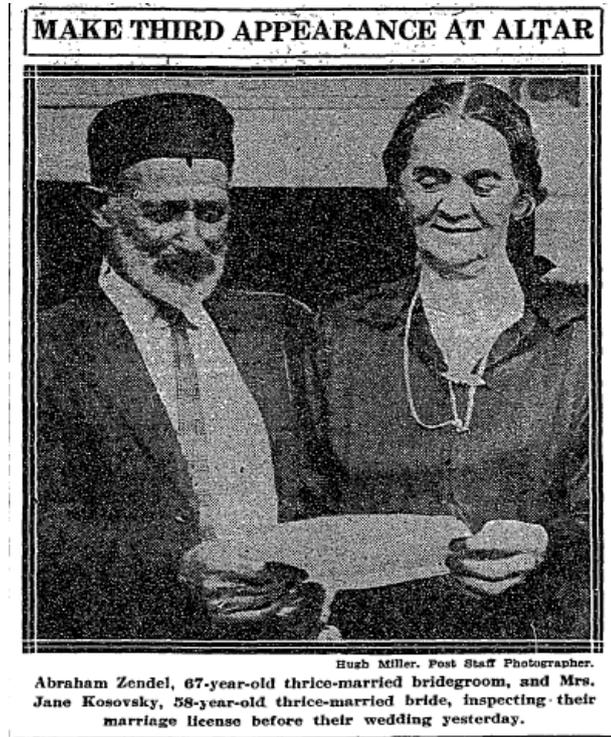
Once Yakov and I verified our relationship, determining that we were first cousins, I asked where he and Maya lived. It turns out that they left Russia in 1997 and now reside in Tel Aviv. So my wife and I traveled to Israel during the latter part of 2014 and met Maya, Yakov and his wife Faina, their son Alex and one of Alex's sons.

How did Yakov's father, my uncle Leib, survive the war? Leib left Berezin during the later part of the 1920's or early part of the 1930's to seek an education. He was in the city of Samara, well to the East of the Nazi invasion when WWII started. He served in the Red Army. Leib passed away in 1975 in Russia.

If you would like to share information about the Zendel family in Byerazino, or if you can help us find the names of the unidentified people in these photos, especially my father's sister, her husband and their children, please contact me.

The Descendants of Jacob (Yankel) Zendel





**Mr. Abraham Zendel weds Mrs. Jane Kosovsky,
Washington DC 1928**



Sol Zendel, on leave from the U.S. Army



Leib Zendel, on leave from the Red Army