

Kimberley Ex-Pats Newsletter #37 – The Zoom Room & The future of the Kimberley Synagogue, Part 2

Compiled by Geraldine Auerbach MBE, London, 26 March 2021

The Zoom Reunions – is this not magic?



Second Reunion on 21 February

As if by magic, 40 people who grew up in Kimberley were in the same room!

Physically they were as far apart as California to Perth – the long way round. But we could see and hear each other clear as a bell. The most frequent comment from many was: ***You look just like I remember your mom / dad!***

Greetings and a brief history were given by my dear friends **Norma and Milton Friedman**, Norma's brother **David Levinsohn** and **David Friedman** (no relation to them but a second cousin to me) and **Mark Horwitz** from Los Angeles. **Lucille Freedman** née Friedman, Milton's sister came in from San Francisco. **Delia and Bobby Benn** were there from Baltimore and **Cherille Berman** from Boston. **Carol Moss** (née Goldberg, granddaughter of Mr and Mrs B) was there –

not sure where from? Two **Odes daughters** and **Leon Chonin** and also **Bernard** and **Helen Benjamin** joined from Toronto. **Joy and Linda née Capon** were with us, also **David Diamond** and **Daphne Gillis** and **Marion Shild (Lewis)** from Cape Town. **Trevor Toubé** and I from London. We had **Itamar Shein**, **Theo Klevansky** and **Shirley Olswang** (granddaughter of Reverend Moross, joined from Israel. We had **David and Adele Cohen** (son of Cecil Cohen of Kimberley) join us (probably from Vancouver). Even **Eli Rabinowitz** from Perth stayed up to be with us. From Kimberley we were so pleased to be joined by **David and Shirley Allen** again – also their son, **Gary Allen** from Johannesburg. And we welcomed **Barney Horwitz** – Chairman of the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation and also his cousin (or uncle) **Jonathan Joseph** from London (Jonathan's granny was Polly Horwitz). (sorry if I have left anyone's name out.)

Barney shared with us the situation of the Kimberley community and the problems faced by South African Jewry - specially in the smaller communities. We could show our appreciation to him, for all he and his small team, representing about 20 Jewish people in Kimberley, are doing. He hopes the community will be viable for the next 10 to 15 years. For the future after that, he has ideas and hopes to preserve the synagogue in a fitting way. Barney said he would be happy to join hands with and have support from Ex-Pats in this mission. Several Ex-Pats who have experience and contacts, would be happy to meet regularly with those in Kimberley, on a Kimberley Jewish heritage steering group, to work towards the best outcomes.

First Reunion on 14 February

As I wrote in last month's Newsletter, our first zoom session on Sunday 14 February, 2021, gave twenty-two people a chance to renew memories, and to talk to each other 'face to face' about their time in Kimberley and since.

David Diamond, **Natalie Sussman** and her daughter **Laura** and **Daphne Toubé** and **Marion Schild** (Lewis now) joined from Cape Town. The **Kleins, Jenny, Malvin and Louis**, (still raw from the loss of youngest brother Bentley after a long and difficult illness, joined from Melbourne as did **Marvin Cohen** (who was a boarder at KHS living in Upington). **Stanley Eberlin** who left Kimberley aged 12 when he father sadly died, was there from Johannesburg.

Sylvia Apter joined us from Israel. She was thrilled to recognise her cousin **Hirsh Jocum** who joined from Pretoria; **Beverley Brenner** was in the room as was our wonderful webmaster, **Eli Rabinowitz** from Perth Australia. **Joy and Linda Capon** joined and **Glenn Kirshner**, who is grandson of Harry Nogid. **Cherille Brown** was there from Boston. **Leon Chonin** joined from Toronto. **Trevor Toubé** and I joined from London. If there is somebody I may have missed out – I'm so sorry.

We were delighted to have **David and Shirley Allen** from Kimberley with us in the Zoom Room, as the connection with Kimberley and those that are still there looking after the sacred spaces is very important to the Ex-Pats and to our whole enterprise of memorialising the families and Jewish institutions and history of Kimberley.

Both these sessions are now safely on YouTube and if you want to, you can see them here

Kimberley Zoom Reunion 1 - 14 February, 2021: https://youtu.be/2iC3CxcWJ_Q

Kimberley Zoom Reunion 2: 21 February 2021: <https://youtu.be/P2BBcVINrxw>

The results – of this injection of connectivity

Not only was there the joy of connecting and sharing – but also, arising from this injection of refreshed memories, there was new resolve to tell their stories – and to work together to safeguard the heritage of Jewish Kimberley..

We are expecting that **Glenn Kirshner**, grandson of Harry Nogid will fill out some more details for the Nogid page [Nogid, Harry](#). **Sylvia Apter** who has a great turn of phrase, will write about her parents **Bert and Evelyn Apter** and their life in Kimberley. **Norma and David Levinsohn** and **Milton and Lucille Friedman** made an immediate appointment to get together to sort out the story of the Levinsohn, Klein (Bloemfontein) and Brenner families. Other stories are in the pipeline too.

Preserving the Jewish heritage of Kimberley

The other significant result of these face-to-face meetings was the willingness of Barney and those in Kimberley to work with the EX-Pats – and the resolve of several Ex-Pats to join together with the existing Kimberley community in looking to the future and finding the best ways of preserving the Jewish heritage of Kimberley, when in 15 or 20 years hence, there may be no viable community or responsible persons to care for it.

Admiration for what Barney and co do

The Ex-Pats have great admiration and appreciation for the sterling work that Barney, David and Shirley Allen, and others in their ever-dwindling team, undertake. That the synagogue is used regularly for Jewish services is – with Barney's love and attention is a wonder to behold. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that the responsibility, both physical and financial, taken on and discharged with such dignity and efficiency to care for the community and its buildings and cemeteries, is awesome. And for this we give much thanks.

However, it seems clear that Ex-Pats who have settled in all parts of the world still have Kimberley very much at their hearts. They remember their Friday night and Saturday services their bar and bat mitzvahs going the cheder and community events and people. Indeed, a small group of Ex-Pats are keen to reach out to those in Kimberley and help to look to the future.

We want you, Barney and David to know that you are not alone. There are Kimberley ex-pats around the world who have experience in such matters and who have connections that may be of great help to you and are willing to join a small group that would meet with you by zoom to open the discussion and seek the best way how you might go forward.

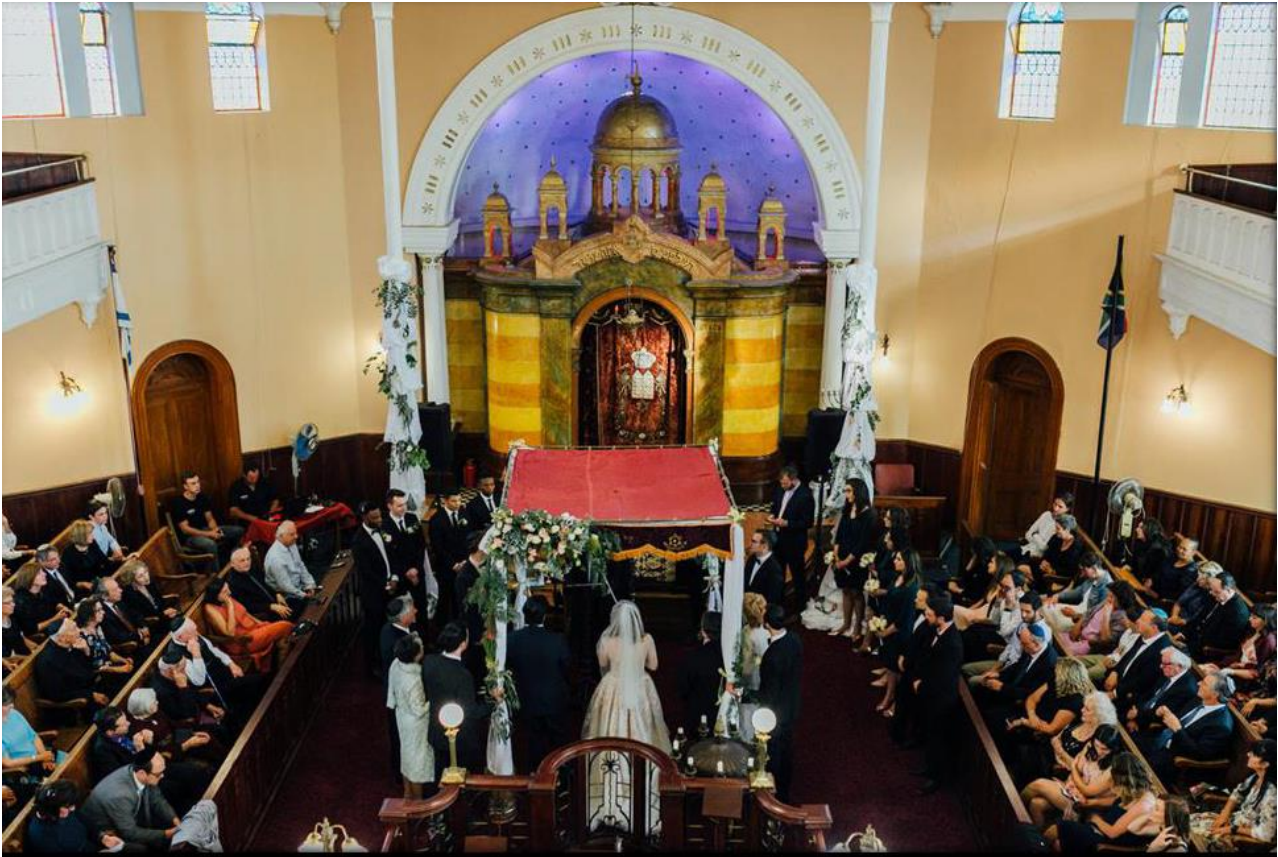
Clearly people, both in Kimberley and Ex-Pats, are very emotional about the Jewish heritage of Kimberley – and this a motivating factor for good. However, we must think rationally and clearly – starting at the beginning and working slowly to evolve a plan that is sustainable.

There is great willingness to help, not only with talking and planning - but possibly with funding. But first there must be a sound plan, that is properly budgeted for them to consider.

Kimberley Heritage Steering Group

As Leon Chonin has said, 'It is my own personal opinion that as expats we need to help in the development of a plan whereby this beautiful shul is preserved. It is going to need an international effort to try and find the financial support to retain this symbol of South African Judaism. We have an uphill struggle to find the means and the strategy that will preserve our shul for future generations. I took forward to participating in this project in whatever role I can play to preserve our heritage.

If you would like to join Barney and Leon on a Kimberley Heritage steering group that includes Ex-Pats and Kimberley Community officers and members, please let me know right away. I will see if Barney and David are willing to meet with us say at the end of April. When I see who wants to be on this heritage group, and where they are based – we can choose an appropriate time for the meeting.



For starters

We all know that civilisations, empires, cities and towns, organisations and buildings have their heyday and then when things move on and they are no longer needed, they become something else, churches and shuls become mosques and museums, or apartments, or they decay or are demolished. When the time comes that no Jewish presence is left in Kimberley capable of taking charge of the buildings and cemeteries what will become of them?

Let's consider just the shul at the moment. Looking at the future governance of the city of Kimberley, the government of the country and the future shrinking of resources in the Jewish community, here are some of the questions all who want to participate (and in fact everybody) should start asking – and trying to answer:

1. Do you think the shul should be preserved?
2. Who do you envisage wants the shul to be preserved
3. Who or what will it be preserved for?
4. What are the possible future uses?
5. Who are the possible future buyers, or guardians?
6. Who and where are the people to have conversations with?
7. What are the financial implications?

If everyone could indeed please try to give their thoughts to these questions, that would be helpful as a base to start with.

This is just the beginning..... Please send me your answers to the questions and pose any more you feel relevant. And let me know if you are willing to be on the steering group.

I hope this will lead to constructive discussion between residents and ex-pats, leading to the best outcome possible for the precious building of the Memorial Road Synagogue.

Happy Pesach everyone

We hope everyone has a happy and meaningful Pesach, giving thanks for our gift of freedom that our own forefathers struggled to ensure for us. We think about the way they managed to leave poverty stricken and restrictive – and dangerous Eastern Europe for the free world – undertake the arduous journey and their arrival in Kimberley. Their efforts were enormous, as we have found through researching our family histories.

Our grandparents and great grandparents triumphed over almost insurmountable difficulties. They turned their hand to whatever would allow them to prosper. And we now having moved all over the free world, are the beneficiaries living in relatively safe democracies. Our parents joined the professions, sent us to University to make life good for us. Our generation and our children have been able to indulge in science, music, painting, filmmaking and all the arts.

We can be proud of the contributions we and our children and parents have made to the cities and countries where they have settled. We will ever give thanks to our own forebears who brought us out of bondage and in doing so, saved us from the Holocaust. What a miracle.

Here is Trevor Toubé's Kimberley recipe for Charoseth:

- Grate an apple finely [I used just one for 2 big sederim in recent years, so I can't see you needing more.]
- Slosh in some kiddush wine. [Not much. You can always add more if needed.]
- Stir in sugar until sweet enough.
- Add cinnamon. [Can adjust the amount later by tasting.]
- Mix with ground nuts. [Tradition is, I think, walnut, but I just use whatever we have, possibly mixtures of bits leftover from my baking, but I find almond works well.]

(I have to make a big bowl as the family love it – so one apple seems a bit snooty! Also I find with apple and kiddush wine, one does not need any sugar?) **What is your favourite recipe for charoseth?**

Do you have a memory of, or a recipe for Pletzlach and Taiglach? What were other Pesach treats – Geschmeerte Matzoh? Did you make your kneidlach with matzohs or only with Matzoh meal? Tell us your tradition and how you are carrying it on.

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