

## As I See It

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hope he is not correct, but Iran makes its appearance in this issue, too—not, I hasten to add, for political reasons, but for genealogy. Persian Jewry, now scattered all over the world, once was a large community. Ephraim Dardashti, following in the footsteps of Alexander Beider, Lars Menk, and others, contributes a discussion on the formation of Jewish family names, along with a long list of them. He also notes efforts to record the tombstones in Jewish cemeteries still standing in Iran today. To orient readers, we have included the chapter on Iran that Dardashti wrote for the *Avotaynu Guide to Jewish Genealogy*.

India, Italy, Gibraltar, and Hungary (Holocaust)—the books reviewed in this issue reflect the same places and events. Jews (and Jewish genealogy) span the globe, but not only in the past. Jewish genealogy looks also to the future. Last summer, veteran genealogist Arthur Obermayer (creator of the Obermayer Prize to individuals who have made outstanding contributions to preserving the history and culture of Jews in Germany) and I talked about the future of Jewish genealogy. Obermayer predicted that, though he doesn't know the specifics, the next big breakthroughs in Jewish genealogy will come through DNA testing, probably in combination with the cloud capacity of the Internet. Look at the remainder of the articles and ask yourself if Obermayer may well be right.

Our fascination with DNA testing continues, that and the determination to make it a useful tool for genealogy. Autosomal testing, however, has received some bad press in Jewish genealogy circles, with many noting that it doesn't seem to predict relationships accurately for Ashkenazi Jews. Jeffrey Paull and his associates decided to test that assertion and carefully designed a research project to investigate that hypothesis. They discuss their results in an important article. In a second article about DNA testing, Rachel Unkefer reports on the amazing findings of the WIRTH group that now seems to have traced the common ancestor back to a Moses

Treves who lived in the 11th century. Note also the ingenious use the group made of autosomal testing as well in its exploration of the Rosa branch of the common tree.

The International Institute for Jewish Genealogy also is looking to the future. Neville Lamdan announces details of the world's first archival repository for Jewish genealogy research papers.

Late last summer, FamilySearch, the genealogy arm of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) announced a series of cooperative agreements with a number of online commercial genealogy companies, a development that AVOTAYNU publisher Gary Mokotoff deems the "most meaningful recent development in record access for family historians in many years." I decided to look further into the details of these agreements and report in this issue my interviews with David Rencher and Ben Bennett, two LDS officials involved in the process. Happily, Rencher firmly added that what is available on the web is only a small fraction of the total holdings of the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. That's good news given that the International Association of Jewish Genealogy Societies (IAJGS) will hold its annual conference in that city in July 2014. Conference co-chair Hal Bookbinder's exciting enumeration of speakers and programs—in addition to the wealth of resources in the Library itself—makes this a "don't miss" event. Be sure to register now to attend, if you have not done so already.

Sallyann Amdur Sack-Pikus  
Editor

### Have you used the AVOTAYNU Consolidated Jewish Surname Index?

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### Research Assistance in Israel

Batya Unterschatz, former director of the Jewish Agency's Search Bureau for Missing Relatives can assist you in locating people who live/lived in Israel. If you have Pages of Testimony, family documents or other material that identify family members you cannot locate, inquire regarding assistance required and rates.

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### WRITING YOUR FAMILY HISTORY?

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