

Arthur Lipshitz was born in 1922 in Whitechapel and was the youngest of seven children born to Abraham and Zelda. Chaim born 1906, Betsy born 1907, Jacob born 1909, Anne born 1911, Sarah born 1915, Morris born 1920 and Arthur in 1922.

The Lipshitz Family origins taken from the memoirs of Jacob Lipshitz, Arthur's brother

Arthur's father Abraham was born in a small town in Lithuania called Ressoine. His father Jacob was a man of property and was said to have owned his own house. Abraham left home after studying at the Slobodka Yeshiva and married at a very early age in Lithuania. He left his wife after she was unable to provide children.

Abraham then left Lithuania with a fortune of one hundred pounds sterling, a considerable sum of money. Abraham stopped off in London, a staging point on his way to South Africa and was robbed of his money at the docks. Details of his early years in London are shrouded in mystery. He was known as a divorcee and Uncle Eliya wrote to his younger sister Zelda in Koshudar near Kovna to come to London where a suitable husband was available.

The rest of Abraham's family gradually left Russia for England and America. His brother Zalman arrived as a deserter from the Russian Army and settled in Cardiff. A sister, Minnie travelled to America, married and settled there. Another sister, Feigl stayed with her three daughters at the house until her husband Myer sent them tickets to travel to America. Joseph recalled that two sisters remained behind and as a child he heard very little about them. He did remember that the London family scraped together enough money to send them a Singer sewing machine to help them earn a living at dressmaking.

My parents never dwelt on their past, not at least in the hearing of their own seven children and so we had little knowledge of their youth in Lithuania. My father was born in a townlet called Ressoine. I have a memory of seeing the name on an envelope marked Rasienie which indicates that there was some ongoing correspondence in my early years.

His and my grandmother's enlarged portraits adorned the living room wall of our London homes. He was a stately looking person with a long square beard and wore a high crowned yarmulke. He was very good looking and his eyes seemed to follow me all around the room. My grandmother, I remember only for her sheitel and an ornate gold chain that adorned her severe blouse. Their source of income was unbeknown to us.

My uncle Eliya bought his youngest sister, my Auntie Fanny to London where she eventually married a Hebrew teacher, my Uncle Yitshak Yanishevsky. Uncle Eliya was very religious and scraped a bare living. He was very good looking, but offset that his wife, Auntie Katie was very much on the plain side.

My father after an unsuccessful attempt at being a grocer shopkeeper found his vocation as a Melamed (religious teacher) and it had a Cheder (a school for Jewish children in which Hebrew and religious knowledge are taught) in a small house, No 6 Lower Chapman St. It was there that I was born on July 22nd, 1909, the third child of the marriage. My brother Hymie and sister Betsy had preceded me at intervals of two years.

Lower Chapman Street was a narrow turning off the wider more prestigious Cannon Street Road. This was part of the East End of London bordering on both sides of the main local artery, the Commercial Road, which was gradually becoming Jewish. In my earliest memories there was the occasional non-Jewish family to be found, but as I grew older, they seemed to move further and further away from the main thoroughfares and formed, as if in the nature of things, non-Jewish

streets. In my earliest memories there seemed to be no friction between the two communities, but that was to come later.

Our family grew apace at the rate of one addition every two years and after Anne and Sarah were born, we moved to the corner of the street where it joined Cannon Street Road. It was a large house with four floors above and one below ground. It also had a large two floor workshop attached which was sorely needed to house a much enlarged Cheder. The second floor of the house proper was sublet to the Chenkin family and in this house a family grew up. Two more brothers were born, Monty and Arthur and the family was complete.

The East End of my pre-war memories was a small enclosed Jewish world in which the non-Jews played a minor peripheral role. At home we were bilingual, that is our parents spoke to us in Yiddish with the ever-increasing mixture of foreign sounding English and we answered in English only. The elementary school we attended was at the other more non-Jew end of our street and there we had our only contact with non-Jewish pupils and teachers. Scripture lessons which started off the daily curriculum were based entirely on the Old Testament because 95% of the pupils were Jewish.

My father during World War 1, in September 1917, when evacuation from London was in an imminent possibility, found a home of refuge in Henley on Thames where he bought his family. Soon they were followed by the Shoham, Yanishevsky and Sharma families, and so started off a mini exodus of East London Jews and it did not take long before there was a small Jewish enclave with its own synagogue. There appeared a notice in the window of the largest pastry cook in the High Street saying, 'We do not serve dogs or Jews'. To newcomers from Europe this had a familiar ring, let us call it an ominous premonition based on Jewish experience of people in our enclave, but did it not, as yet, affect the school going children as their parents hushed up all reference to it in their hearing, but this did not last long. The children began to complain that they were being called names by other children for reasons beyond their understanding. At their tender age they were already victims of a social plague that was beyond the ability of their parents to explain. Stone throwing incidents became more frequent and Jewish children more and more affected. There were about ten of us altogether, Hymie aged ten being the eldest. The stone barrages were becoming really dangerous. This climaxed one day when the Jewish children panicked and screaming made a dash for the safety of the school gate. Suddenly, Hymie stooped, picked up a stone, turned about and faced the stone throwers. He made a menacing gesture as if he was about to let fly. This is the mental picture probably registered in my memory. His round face, white as chalk, eyes and mouth like thin slits, challenging and menacing, as he advanced towards our tormentors, who immediately turned tail and fled. The matter did not rest there. A delegation of Jewish parents came to protest and complained to the headmaster Mr Eagles. He as a Quaker, came up with a suggestion. Let us organise football teams of Jews versus Christians. This will let off steam and help solve the problem. The logic of this is beyond my comprehension.

Henley had been a wonderful interlude and we had been introduced to a different concept of living and made aware of the nature of things that lived, of flowing rivers, of canoeing and punting, of fishing, of the ecstasy of smelling flowers, of the enduring ecstasy of the smell of honeysuckle hedges. Appreciation of the quality of life in our later years owed much to our sojourn in Henley.

Abraham Lipshitz was short and rotund, sported a short Van Dyke beard and had an engaging charismatic personality. His contact the outside gentile world and his knowledge of English, both written and spoken, was minimal. In spite of this he managed to get along in a different, even hostile world without great difficulty. I have a memory of the little room in the Cheder and the room is piled high, floor to ceiling, with large size packets of Matzos. The Matzos were intended for the poor and

needy whose budgets would have been under greater strain during the holiday periods. There was a local charity organization called Linat Hatsedek which distributed funds and food for the needy. Abraham was the honorary president of this society and he was the arbiter and distributor. He had the assistance of a committee of wealthy matrons who were responsible for collecting the funds and their allocation. I have a vivid picture of a group of hefty fur clad women who attended the committee meeting in the Cheder and the thrill of stroking their luxurious furs.

Abraham's wife, not without a tinge of pride, called him a 'kolsher mensch'. That is a person who busies himself in local affairs and interest to which he devotes most of his time outside his main interest of providing for his family. For many years he was the elected Hon. President of the largest synagogue in the nearby area. He held the same position in the aforementioned charity and was also a leading member of the no. 4 Fulbourne Street Zionist Society – all of these, time consuming non-remunerative jobs. Everything at 106 Cannon Street, revolved around Abraham and his authority was absolute.

Our Cheder, was still in its heyday in the early twenties. The teaching staff had already been augmented by my brother Hymie, then a student at the Jews college for perspective rabbis and teachers, and I, who had been precast for a business career was working up till six o'clock every evening, was also roped in to assist, mainly with the younger children but also with the class of Bar Mitzvah boys. Hymie or Chaim as he preferred to be called, was the first Rosh Gedud ever, Gedud Trumpeldor, and I was one of the two Seganim. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Habonim_Dror

In 1930 I started in business on my own and so ended my career as a Hebrew teacher. The Cheder carried on but changing conditions in Jewish life in the East End was causing a falling off of pupils. Many of the immigrants of the first two decades of the century, the basis of our clientele, had become economically well established and an exodus to 'greener pastures' that is, roomier living space, wider tree lined streets, houses that had indoor sanitation, even their own bathrooms and large flower filled parks and open spaces nearby, began as a trickle and soon into a fast moving stream. First northwards to Hackney, Stoke Newington, Clapton, Stamford Hill, in that order. Later eastwards to Ilford and then to the north west embracing Swiss Cottage, Golders Green, Hampstead and Hendon. They took with them their community life, their synagogues, built larger, grander ones, and of course, the prospective pupils for our Cheder.

Clapton and Stamford Hill were fast becoming Jewish centres and there a Cheder was opened with Chaim in charge. Our original Cheder had fewer and fewer pupils and the upper floor was sublet to a dress manufacturer. By this time Chaim, Bessie and I had married and left home, and Anne had gone to try her luck in Palestine. The family headquarters shifted to Northfield Road, Stamford Hill and then finally the Cheder closed down.

At the beginning of 1939, Jacob was living at Rose Cottage, Holt Lane in Alton, Hampshire with his family, his mother in law and brother Monty where he was running a draper's shop.

In 1940, Jacob joined the Auxiliary Fire Service and had moved back to London living at 19 Hessel Street, E1, the same year his brother Arthur enlisted at Euston into the RAF.

Jacob's memoirs of being on duty in the Auxiliary Fire Brigade and attending the fire at the British Museum during the Blitz is found on another link.