

Taung: Jewish families and connections

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Morris Bayer (left)

Zlata and Aaron Senderovitz (Right)



Taung is situated in the Northern Cape about 80 miles directly North of Kimberley, past Warrenton and Border (now called Jan Kempdorp). The town is

about 30 miles south of Vryburg. The settlement existed long before white people arrived. In the

Tswana language the name means 'Home of the Lion'. It was named after a Baralong Chief called Tau.

The first European travellers visited the region in 1801, and within a few years it had become a regular calling point for researchers and missionaries. The Reverend Robert Moffat founded the first permanent European settlement in 1818 at Kuruman, and within a few years, a number of other missions were established.

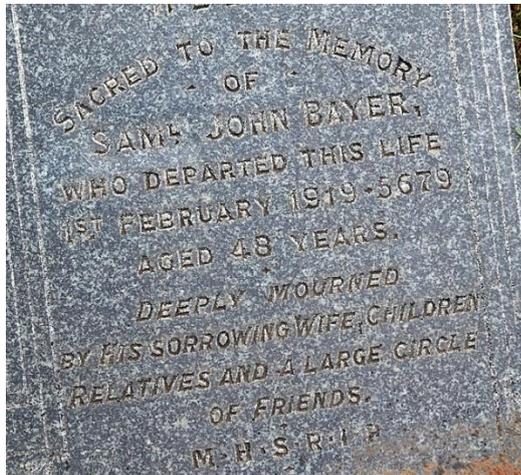
The area, including the towns of Vryburg, Mafeking, Kuruman and Taung, was strategically on the corridor northwards of the British Cape Colony (and westwards of the Transvaal Republic) which both coveted this land – especially when gold and diamonds were being discovered in the areas in the 1880s. In 1882 and '83 the Boers established their republics of Goshen and Stellaland in these places. Both these republics straddled the British route from the Cape to the north – and they were having none of that. In March 1885 the British send an expeditionary force led by Sir Charles Warren, which brought these republics to a bloodless end. After the withdrawal of the Warren Expedition, the portion of Bechuanaland south of the Molope River was declared 'British Bechuanaland' while the northern part remained a 'Protectorate'. In March 1895 the separation between the two Bechuanalands was completed, and British Bechuanaland was annexed by the Cape Colony. Taung became an administrative centre within a large native reserve.

Census figures indicate that in 1904 the territory had a total of 84,472 residents, of whom 11,683 were literate (ie probably white.) However, alluvial diamonds were found in the area. This is possibly another reason why white settlers and Jews arrived on the scene in the early 1900s either to deal with the diamonds, or to open stores and establish farms to provide food and services to the diggers and to the natives on the reserve and the British officials. In 1920 a public digging was proclaimed in the Taung area – this digging, actually inside a native reserve.

First Jews in the area

Brothers: Simon and Samuel Bayer

The first Jews to have arrived in Taung were the brothers **Simon and Samuel Bayer** who came in the early years of the 20th century. They had married two sisters in Lithuania (Simon married Esparantia and Samuel married Nechama). After trying out other locations, they settled in Taung around 1903 establishing a farm and a trading store.

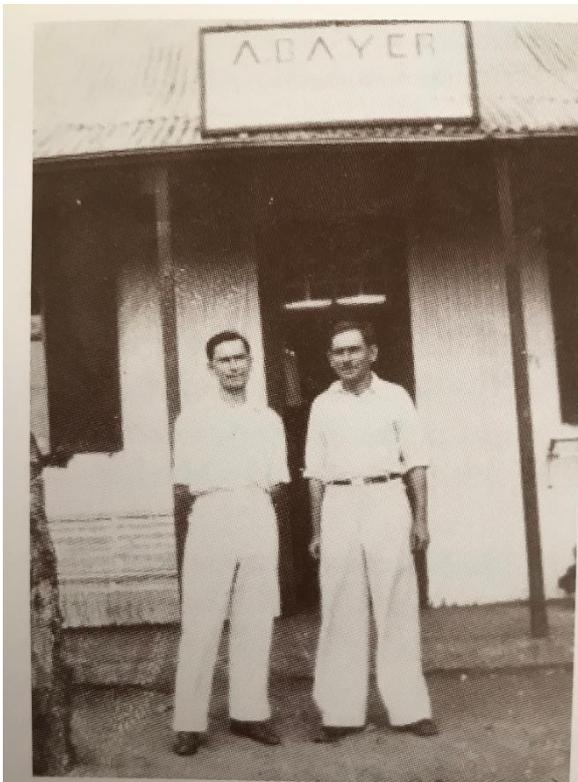


Samuel sadly died of the flu pandemic in 1919 aged just 48. Simon lived to 82 and died in 1946.

Both are buried in Kimberley.

Two of Samuel and Simon's other brothers, **Morris** and

Lipman Bayer, followed them to Taung in 1914. They ran a hotel and farmed in the area. Simon's son (called Morris Philip Bayer) later owned the hotel in Taung. Morris Philip Bayer was a member of the divisional Council. He married Harriet, the daughter of another well-known Taung family, the



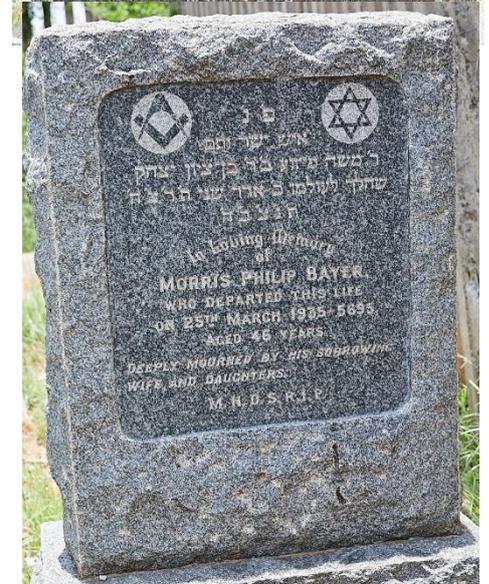
Abie and Nathan Bayer were farmers and partners outside their general dealer's store. (Courtesy Arnold Bayer)

Senderowitzes. (More of them later).

After Morris's death, Harriet and her daughter Frieda Sapire ran the business in Taung until 1945. Simon and his son Morris Philip (also buried in Kimberley) seem to have been Freemasons looking at their gravestones.

Lipman and his wife **Ada** had two sons, **Nathan** and **Abe Bayer** and a daughter **Rita**. They were farmers around the Northern Cape and later became partners in Nathan's general dealer's store in Taung. Both of their wives died young and Rita helped to look after their children.

Arnold Bayer, Son of Abe, who was a small child around eight years old when he lived in



Taung, wrote: Our grandfather **Lipman Bayer** came from a large family in Lithuania. His father was married twice so there were half brothers and sisters and just to complicate matters there were a few half-brothers with the same name.

My father told us that Lipman had had a shoe store in Johannesburg for a short time, he apparently had bad eyesight and customers were leaving their old shoes in the boxes and walking out in new shoes. When this was discovered, needless to say he closed the store.

There were Bayer families in the Northern Cape, in Border (now Jan Kempdorp) Taung and Niekerkshoop (between Douglas and Prieska) and Lipman went to open a business at Manyeding which is near Kuruman, before settling in Taung. Lipman and his wife Ada were buried in Vryburg Lipman in 1946) and Ada in 1935.

Arnold Bayer continued: **Adele's** and my father **Abe Bayer** came to South Africa in 1921 and after working for various members of the family who had settled around the country and in Taung, established himself there as well. Abe's brother Nathan had opened a store at Taung Station. It was there, while visiting his brother, that Abe met our mother to be, **Helen Kovensky** who was teaching at the Taung Primary School in the early nineteen thirties. (See her letter of recommendation from 'Rabbi' Harris Isaacs at the end of this story)

Our parents were married in 1935 at a place called **Belmont** which is about 45 miles south of Kimberley on the main road to Cape Town. Our Kovensky grandparents owned the Store and Hotel at Belmont Station which the newly-marrieds purchased. Adele and I were both born in Kimberley, myself in 1937 and Adele in 1940. In 1940 a farm close to the Store and Hotel in Belmont came onto the market and my dad bought that.

An interesting Kovensky story is related to the memorial candelabra in the Kimberley



Synagogue. This elaborate floor-standing item, holding nine candles was said to have been presented to the community by the families of deceased soldiers, who were all killed fighting for the allies in the First World War. They asked for it to be lit each year on Erev Yom Kippur (which it is).

Sadly, little is known about the families or the circumstances of the gift which stands between the Bimah and the Ark. Some thought they were all related. Barry Katz went to examine the piece and photograph it. The names and regiments of the fallen soldiers are inscribed beside each candle. Ida Horwitz provided all the names and regiments.

Arnold Bayer (b Kimberley 1937) was able to explain:

I have some information for you with regards to the memorial for the nine soldiers killed in the 1914 - 1918 war. Michael Kovenski was a half-brother to my mother Helen Kovensky. (I don't know when they changed the spelling of their name.) He was a pupil at CBC and ran away from school to join the army. When his father discovered this, he traced him, and the commander of the camp was informed that Michael was under-age to be in the army. Michael was sent back to College – only for him to run away again. This time he joined the army under a false name and the family were unable to trace him. (I'm sure it was Isaacs.) He was shipped to Europe and was wounded and was in hospital in England. He recovered and stayed with an uncle and aunt in Birmingham. After being declared fit again he returned to the front. Unfortunately, he was killed one month before armistice!



To the best of my knowledge the memorial was donated by the families of the fallen soldiers **who were not connected to each other except for their mutual grief.** The memorial is bottom right in this picture of the Kimberley shul. See more on the Kimberley synagogue page.

Arnold continued about Taung: In 1946, we moved to **Taung**, where my dad Abe joined his brother Nathan in business. I went to school in Taung for a year and in 1947, I became a boarder at CBC in Kimberley. Because the College boarding house was full, I and about 10 others were placed with families as outside boarders. I was placed with a remarkable lady by the name of **Polly Horwitz** who lived in Lodge Road.

Arnold Bayer continued: During 1952 my mother Helen née Kovensky passed away. I then left CBC at the end of 1952 to continue my studies at the Technical College in Port Elizabeth. I missed Kimberley very much. As a boarder I had been befriended by many Jewish families and will never forget their hospitality especially from my good friend **Bernard Benjamin** and his mother and father. This friendship and hospitality extended even to when I returned to Kimberley when Bernard and Helen (Pat) and family were always very kind to me and my wife Rhona and our children.

I lived in Port Elizabeth for 11 years and then decided to return to the Kimberley area as my dad had by then bought another farm and I wanted to go farming. I used to go to Johannesburg fairly often and in 1966 I met my wife Rhona (nee Startz) we got married the same year and lived on the farm at Belmont for 6 years until Susan, eldest of our 3 children had to start school and we moved into Kimberley. Our next two children, Howard and Lorin went to the Hebrew Play Centre run by Mrs Venter and Mrs Smith. After a few years of commuting between the farm and Kimberley I re-entered the motor trade until we left Kimberley in 1993 and settled in Johannesburg. Rhona and I recall, with great fondness, the years we lived in Kimberley and even to this day, 30 years later, when an opportunity presents itself to go to Kimberley, we make every effort to make the trip.

Population statistics and community records of Taung, as quoted on page 310 of the Volume 2 of Jewish Life in South African Small Communities show there were 30 Jews in the Taung area in 1936 and 20 in 1943. By 1960 there were just 9 and by 1990 just one. There were a few other Jewish families in the Taung area that Arnold remembers. He says there was **Morris Bayer** who was an uncle to our father **Abe Bayer**. **Marcus Rauff** was there as well as the **Senderowitz** family. The **Oshry** family farmed about 20 miles from Taung and the **Jocum** family were farming about 35 miles from **Taung** on the way to **Reivilo** (Olivier spelt backwards). There was also a family by the name of **Gelb** who lived on the Vaal-Hartz irrigation scheme. They made Aliyah in the early 1950's, and the last one I can think of is **Morrie Wolpert** who for many years had a shop at Pudimoe. (Other surnames listed for Taung in the South African Friends of Beit Hatefutsoth book are: Abrams, Adler, Berger, Bloom, Edelman, Friedman, Horowitz, Oshry, Osrin, Pincus, Shaffer, Spitz, Sussman, Traub, Weinreich and Zal.)

The Senderovitz Family of Taung

Arnold Bayer said: 'My memory of the Senderovitz Family is a bit sketchy. We lived in Taung when I was about 8 years old. These were the years before apartheid became official policy. There was a large area around, known as 'The Reserve', and Taung was part of it. I do recall that the Senderovitz family had a store in the reserve about eight miles from Taung. The one brother's name was Hymie and I have an idea that he was traumatised by a war experience, I do know that Arnold Rauff was related to the Sender family in Israel and there is a possibility that they were the same family.'

Jane Beth Cantor wrote in August 2017 about her Taung, Senderovitz family

Kimberley is very close to my heart. My grandfather **Aaron Senderovitz** lived in Kimberley, first in early 1900s and then left to go back to Lithuania, as his father was dying. He originally ran a shop with another Senderovitz, no relation we believe. One of his brothers was Heyman Senderovitz a businessman in Kimberley and Dov Sender was Heyman's son. Dov Sender was very well known in the Jewish community.

Jane Beth continued: '**Aaron Senderovitz**, my grandfather, then settled in Taung. He was a very learned man. He spoke many languages and ran all the Shul services for the handful of Jews in the Taung area. He had eight children from his first wife Anna. After she died, my grandmother Zlata (Née Edelman) a girl of 25 was brought out from Latvia to marry him.

Aaron was 35 years older than **Zlata**! Jane says: 'Aaron was old enough to be my mom's Zaida not just her father, but Zlata had married Aaron because she saw the opportunity of safety and security after her father and one brother were murdered by the Cossacks.

Aaron and his second wife Zlata Senderovitz



Jane said: 'My mom **Pearl Sender**, was from his second marriage to Zlata. Aron and Zlata had four children: Michael the oldest was born in 1914, then Pearl (1918), Mendel (1922) and the youngest Ethel was born four years later in 1926. They were all born and raised in Taung. Ethel was just two and a half years old when her father Aaron died.

Pearl, at the age of 85, in 2003, wrote a description about her life in Taung. Jane copied the ten-page document and sent it to me – which you can read at the end of this story. Pearl wrote that she does not know why people came to live in Taung Village and Taung Station (which are about five miles apart from each other). She said the white population of Taung were English speaking. They were mainly Catholics, Seventh Day Adventists and Jews – and just one Afrikaner family. She describes their house and the small village school where there were just two classrooms for all ages, enabling her bright brother Mendel in Standard Three to learn Standard Six lessons.

Pearl was at one time sent to stay with her Aunt Mimmi at Taung Station as her mother felt the school standard was higher there than in the village where they lived. Aaron had a shop eight miles to the southwest of Taung in the Reserve at Mokasa. He left home early on Monday morning and was away all week, coming back in time for Shabbos with gifts of sugar cane and sweets for the children. Jane said: My gran Zlata ran another shop in the village. Sure, this was another time, another era. Such a hard, hard life they had. (Read Pearl's memoir from page 12.)

My mom's oldest brother **Mike Senderovitz** enlisted in the army during the Second World War and was sent up north in a Scottish regiment to Tobruk. He was captured when Tobruk fell to the German commander Rommel and was thrown into Italian prisoner of war camps. I have his story and it is fascinating how he escaped just before being hauled off to die in a concentration camp. I want to type this and give it to Yad Vashem because he saved many lives by outwitting an Italian traitor.



My mother **Pearl Sender** married my dad, **Abraham Mirwis** who was born in South Africa of Lithuanian parents. After marriage, they went to live in Germiston where I was brought up. I had two brothers and a sister and they sadly, have all passed away so tragically from ill health. My dad's father **Morris Mirwis** has a very impressive history. His mother was a Mervis married to a Mirwis. Morris and his wife Jane (after whom I am named) first settled in Cape Town. I am a cousin to Ephraim Mirwis, Chief Rabbi of the UK and Commonwealth, as well as the very famous Rabbi Mervis who started a famous Shul in Constitution Street in District Six, that moved to Vredehoek in Cape Town. But that is also another story!

Jane continued: my mother **Pearl Sender**, knew many Jewish families in Taung. I often wonder about those times in Taung. Jane asked on the Kimberley Jewish community Facebook pages if anyone knew her family.'

Leon Chonin answered that his great uncle Sam Chonin had opened a general dealer's business in Beaconsfield but was not able to employ his nephew Edel (Leon's father) hence his father had to continue with his trade as a tailor. He opened his first tailor shop near the store of Klein Brothers, very close to the Big Hole. However, he was able to live with his uncle Sam's daughter – his cousin, Sadi who was now married to **Israel Oshry** who farmed near Taung.

The Farming Jocums Family

Leon Chonin recalled that his great-uncle Sam's other daughter **Dinah**, married **Mike Jocum** who came from the Beaufort West area. He was encouraged by his brother-in-law, **Israel Oshry** also to enter the farming business in the Taung area. Mike Jocum purchased farmland in the Reivilo district 50 km due West of Taung in 1938. **Mike and Dinah Jocum** had four children, **Laurie, Maisy, Mildred and Cyril**. They were very friendly with Kimberley folks, **Jeff Geller** and the **Goldenbaums, Myra and Joseph**. Laurie went into the farming business with his father Mike.

Liesel Jocum also answered Jane's request: Hi to you. We, my husband **Isaac** and I, live near Taung on a farm. My father-in-law was **Laurie Jocum**. We are the only Jews still living near Taung. We live on the farm Kokwaan. My father-in-law spoke of a Jewish shop owner by the name of Abrahams? (Perhaps it was Abe Bayer)

Jane replied to Liesel: Wow Liesel, glad to hear from you still living in the area. When my mom lived in Taung she said there were only a few Jewish families. I don't know about Abrahams.

Liesel said: Hi Jane, we live on a farm 50km from Taung and not in Taung itself. Unfortunately, none of your family's names do we recall as we are the third and probably the last generation. My father-in-law **Laurie Jocum** started farming here in 1938 and the only other Jewish family he mentioned was the three **Rauff brothers**. Another Jewish shop trader near us was called **Natie Bayer**. Very interesting to hear the history of Taung.



The Jocum family – Isaac, Liesel, Anita and Cyril on their farm. (Courtesy Isaac Jocum)

Geraldine says in the early 50s she was at school with **Adele Bayer** from Taung (Natie's niece, Abe's daughter) who was at Beit House, the GHS boarding school. Her Brother **Arnold** was also at school in Kimberley as a boarder at CBC.

Hirsch Jocum, son of **Cyril and Taube Jocum**, who was born in Cape Town in 1953 wrote: **Michael and Dinah Jocum** and their son, **Laurie**, farmed 50 km from Taung Station, in the direction of Reivilo (to the west). Taung Station and Taung Village were roughly five km apart, each with its own post office. In 1958 my father **Cyril** joined his brother **Laurie** and their father **Mike** in the farming business. Their business was cattle ranching.

Hirsch continued: I vividly recall my father, **Cyril Jocum**, after collecting the post, at Taung Station going to greet **Abe Bayer** and his sister **Rita** at their general dealer store, which if I recall accurately, was very close to the station post office. There was also a daily South African Railway bus service between Taung Station and Reivilo. One of the stops was officially called Bayers Halt. It was close to **Nathan Bayer's** farm "Quo". These memories stretch back to the very early 1960's.

The farms exist to this very day still owned by the family. Hirsh said: I went to school in Kimberley. I was at KHS with **Franklin Dubowitz** and **Jeff Katz**. I was a boarder and remember the **Schatz**, **Lenhoff** and **Kurland** boys from Upington also boarders very well. I was friendly with **Barney Horwitz** (grandson of Polly Horwitz). Barney unfortunately went to CBC. I say 'unfortunately' because CBC just could not beat us at rugby or swimming! The Chonin family are cousins of mine.

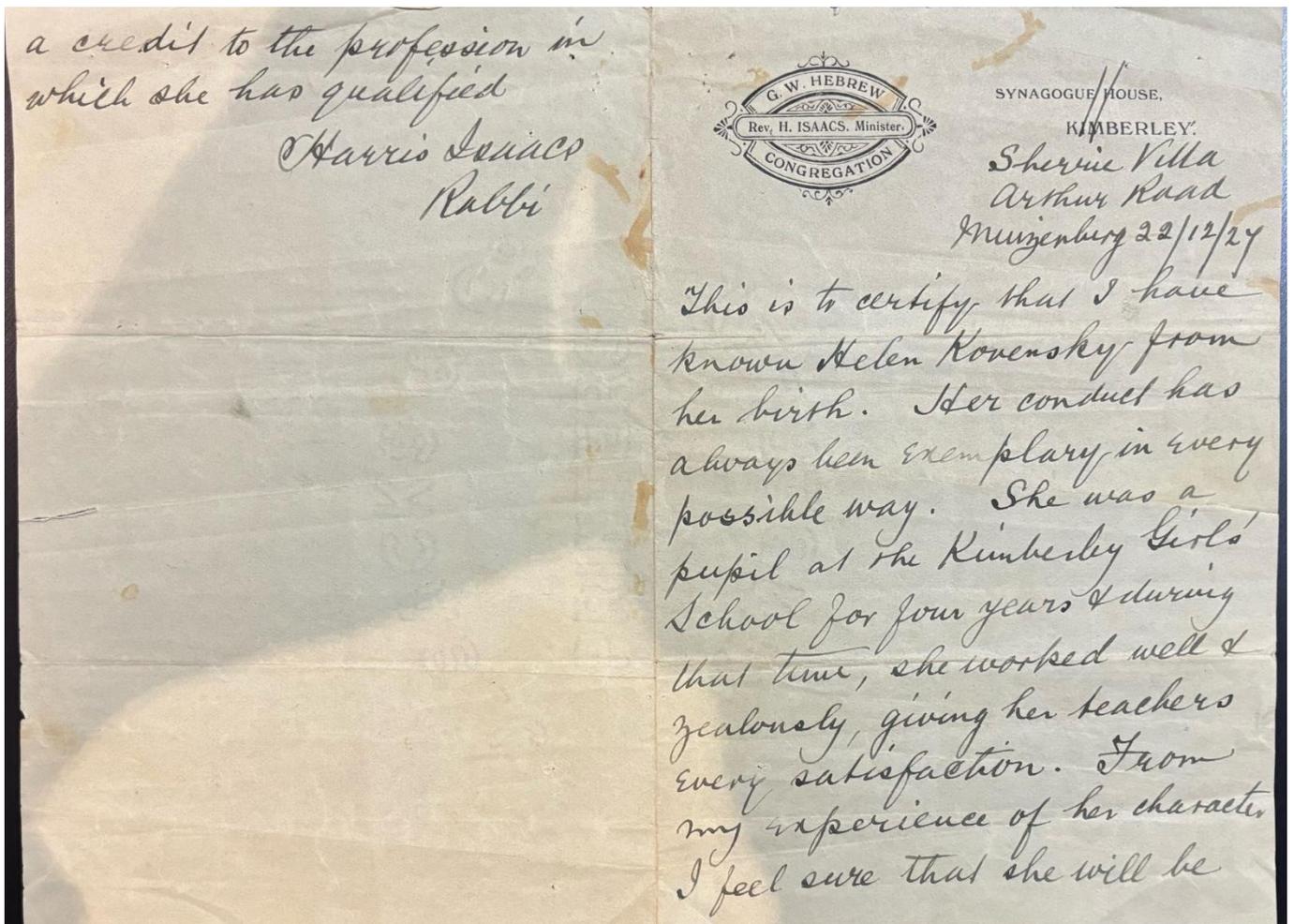
Hirsh Jocum said: After matriculating I went to further my studies at Pretoria University. I am a practising General Medical Practitioner in Pretoria. I have 3 sons, all professionals, and 3 beautiful granddaughters. They reside in Cape Town, Sydney and Saint Louis.



Leon Chonin asked if they were related to **Neil Odes** who is now in Toronto (where Leon is). Jane replied: I think my cousin Dr Ivan Cohen is related to Odes family. Dov Senderovitz had a sister Lulu and when they were very young their mother Dinah was electrocuted aged 33. I think Dinah was an Odes. (See confirmation on her gravestone in Kimberley.) Their father was Heyman Senderovitz brother of Aaron. Lulu had three sons Ivan Cohen and Alan and David Alperstein. All became successful doctors and Lulu and Henry Alperstein were Mayor and mayoress of Kingwilliamstown. Alan is a top fertility gynaecologist in Cape Town and David a plastic surgeon in America. Also, there are many Senderovitz or Sender family members in Cape Town and Israel.

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**Letter of recommendation for Helen Kovensky** (later Bayer) to be a schoolteacher at Taung from Rev 'Rabbi' Harris Isaacs.

Interesting to see also the Griqualand West Hebrew Congregation insignia for him.



Harris Isacs with his wife Bella and their ten children served in Kimberley for thirty-three years between 1890 to 1927. Read Rev Harris Isaac's family story here: [Isaacs, Rev Harris](#)

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## Taung is famous – for discoveries regarding the origin of man

**Taung is well-known for an anthropological discovery** of international renown. In 1924 a fossil of a juvenile skull was discovered having been blasted out of the local limestone quarry. It found its way to Professor Raymond Dart at Wits University who immediately recognised it as a hominid species – a missing link between ape and man. The skull became known as the Taung Child.

The Taung Child's fossilised skull showed the first evidence of early human-like upright, two-legged (bipedal) walking. The evidence was the position of the Taung Child's foramen magnum, or the hole through which the spinal cord connects with the brain. This spinal cord hole is positioned toward the front of the Taung Child's skull, a characteristic associated with bipedal locomotion. This bipedal adaptation allows the head to balance atop of the neck and leaves the arms free; while contrastingly, a four-legged ape has its foramen magnum positioned toward the rear of the head to keep its eyes facing forward (and not down) when it moves. The cast of the brain is preserved by the filling of the skull with limestone breccia. The little Taung skull is thought to be from an approximately three-year-old child that had lived in Southern Africa around 2.5 million years ago.



This species was named [Australopithecus africanus](#), supporting [Charles Darwin's](#) concepts that the closest living relatives of humans are the [African apes](#).

The skull is housed at the University of Wits in Johannesburg.

Professor Phillip Tobias and the 'Taung Child' skull.

When this 3-year-old child's skull was found in 1924, it was among the first early humanoid fossils to be found in Africa, and the first to draw major attention to this region as a place of origin of the human family tree. Scientists did not want to believe that man might have evolved in Africa. They had been taken in by a fake skull called the [Piltdown Man](#) of a proposed human ancestor from England. It took more than 20 years for Raymond Dart to be vindicated and for the Piltdown Man to be exposed as a fake, and for scientist to accept the importance of Africa as a major source of human evolution. The [Taung Child](#) is thus among the most important early human-like fossils ever discovered.

Palaeoanthropologist, **Professor Lee Berger** from the University of the Witwatersrand demonstrates on video in 2020, the original Taung Child fossil (seen above in Professor Tobias's hands). It is one of the many original fossils housed at Wits University Museum. He explains how it was found and how it came to be that Professor Dart – the one person who would be able to recognise what it was, was able to see it. It seems there was a Jewish aspect that connected up

all the dots: see what this is in this fascinating lecture by Professor Berger by clicking here:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mWOJ56\\_Et0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mWOJ56_Et0)

How do we know how the Taung Child died?

The Taung Child is thought have been attacked and killed by an eagle. Scientists suspect an eagle killed the Taung Child because puncture marks were found at the bottom of the 3-year-old's eye sockets. These marks resemble those made by a modern eagle's sharp talons and beak when they attack monkeys in Africa today. Other evidence for the eagle kill hypothesis includes the presence of eggshells at the site and an unusual mixture of animals bones found alongside the Taung Child's skull. Many of these small animal bones also have damage resembling that made by modern birds of prey.

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Taung: Jewish families and connections

Compiled by **Geraldine Auerbach MBE**, London, June 2024 from information supplied by Arnold Bayer, Jane Beth Cantor, Leon Chonin, Liesel Jocum, Hirsch Jocum as well as information and pictures from Volume 2 of ***Jewish Life in South African Small Communities*** researched and published by the South African Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth. (Also from Wikipedia and other internet resources).

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On the next pages you can read Pearl Senderovitz's personal memoir of growing up in Taung.

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Pearl Senderovitz wrote about her life in Taung

Pearl's Memoirs

MEMOIRS BY PEARL MIRWIS ABOUT HER EARLY DAYS IN TAUNGS

I do not know if any of my family would be interested to read about my life. I was telling a friend of mine some of the incidents that have occurred to me and she suggested that I put these matters down on paper. I was born in Taungs now called Taung on the sixth of April, 1918 making me now eighty five in the year 2003. I am well and remember so much, but my sight, even though I recently had a cataract operation is not too good.

My father Aaron, during his first marriage, had eight children. I do not know how his first wife died but when he married my mother Zlata, his children were all grown up and out of the house with the exception of Betty. My mother came from Latvia as a young girl of twenty five and a marriage was arranged to my dad who was thirty five years older than her. They had four children; Michael, Pearl, Mendel and Ethel. My dad was 72 ½ when Ethel was born. He was 75 when he died of throat cancer. I have just had the seventy fourth Yartzheit for him (August, 2003). He was born in Lithuania and came to South Africa as a young man and on the boat here he met another man with the same surname as him, Senderovitz, but spelt with a "w" instead of a "v". They were not related. The two of them went to Kimberley and opened a general dealer's store.

After a year my father received a cable saying that his father was in bad health and that he should return. He did so but unfortunately he arrived a few days too late as his father had already passed away. He remained in Russia for a few years, got married and had a son Lewis. The family then returned to South Africa and went to live in Taungs and the remaining seven children were born. He started a General Dealer's store. The shop was adjoining the house where we lived; it had a kitchen a lounge dining room and two bedrooms, the bathroom was in the shop area. Later four additional bedrooms were built in the back yard as well as a stable for our horses. We had a cart for our own use and another for the goods in the business. Nearby the house was a kraal for our cows which supplied us with milk. As children we used to enjoy watching the cows being milked the taste of the fresh milk and especially the froth was delicious. My mother made white cheese and cream. Twice a week we received a parcel from Kimberley containing Kosher meat, polony, fish and chalas. This was

packed in ice and it arrived by train at the station four miles away where we picked it up. My mother was very kosher. We had poultry in the yard and when we needed a chicken to eat, Dad would cut its throat while saying a brocha. The chicken would go into convulsions and died a few minutes later.

Dad was a very learned man and knew the Torah as well as any Rabbi. At one time when it was Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur people would come from Kimberley and the surrounding areas for the services. At first we used to make use of other semi Rabbis to conduct the proceedings but later my father took over because he knew how to do it and also because he never charged the community. The services were held at a hotel near the Taungs station which was owned by Morris Bayer who had the same name as the Morris Bayer who was married to Harriet, one of my mother's sisters.

The white population of Taungs was made up of Roman Catholics, Seven Day Adventists and Jews. Only one Afrikaans family lived in the area; they had a daughter named Topsy who was a real bully. Once she forced me to suck on a bone and then said to me that it was from a pig. I hated her! The Seven Day Adventists were a fine group of people. Their minister was a Mr. Cooper who once went on an overseas visit and on his return he gave my father a present of a book which he had bought for him. Also from this group, were the Renou family; father, mother and fourteen children. They were all very good looking and I enjoyed visiting them. I was friendly with one of the daughters by the name of Mona. They stayed some distance from us and to get there I had to walk through a wooded area, but everything was very safe in those days. The Roman Catholics had at the time what was considered to be the best convent in the country in Taungs and often on a Saturday afternoon the Father and Brothers used to come and visit my father to discuss the Bible. The convent had a beautiful orchard and vegetable garden and used to sell produce to the community.

My mother, Zlata, as I mentioned earlier was very religious and used to say her prayers three times a day. We were not allowed to come to eat at the table if we had not washed our hands. We always had to say a Brocha before meals. If the meat and milk knives and forks were ever mixed up, my

mother insisted that they be stuck in the ground for twenty four hours. Once, when a visitor to our house saw the knives stuck in the soil, she in all innocence asked if we grew knives and forks! Mom managed the shop the in Taungs while my father went to Mokasa some six miles away where he had another shop. He usually left home early on a Monday morning and returned on the Friday afternoon in good time for Shabos. We always had a fine meal that night and Dad insisted on "kishcka", which was made from flour, fat and other fillings and then stuffed into a casing of intestine and boiled. It was delicious. I have not tasted it for ages. Mom was always busy in the shop and she did not have much time to devote to cooking. She was a wonderful mother who never complained and when I think back her life could not have been easy. She was widowed at an early age with four young children. When Mike the eldest, finished standard six my mother wanted to send him to Kimberley or Vryburg to continue his education, but my father insisted that he leave school and manage one of the shops. Dad died shortly afterwards and Mom sent Mike to board at Kimberley Boys' High where he completed his matric.

The village school was a mile away from home. The building consisted of only two class rooms. The whole school had a total of about thirty children, which were divided up in two sections from grade one to standard two and from standard three to standard six. The two teachers would give lessons to each group of children while the others were still in the class so a pupil who was bright, such as my brother Mendel could while in standard three, take advantage of the lessons given to the standard sixes. On my first day of school, my brother Michael, who owned a bicycle said that I must sit on the handle bars for a ride to school. Why I accepted I will never know, while going through a dry river bed I was thrown off and badly hurt my nose. I walked the rest of the way.

Mike was a daredevil and got up to all sorts of mischief. One of his talents was bareback horse riding and one day he again told me to climb up onto our beautiful horse, Prince. This time I clung onto Mike for dear life. I think I was about eight at the time and it was some two years after the bike trip with him. It was a terrifying experience, fortunately safe, but I have never been near a horse since.

When my mother went into labor with what was to be my young sister, Ethel, she woke up Mike and told him to go and call Dr. Clayton and the midwife Mrs. Samson who lived near the school. After the delivery, Mike and one of his friends went on their horses leaving a note to say that they were going to spend some ten days at Hall's farm which was some thirty miles away. In those days there were no telephones so we naturally could not get in touch with him, so we had an anxious wait until his return. My aunt Minnie who had come to stay with us to help with the new arrival was so outraged that on Mike's return she had him tied to a peppercorn tree in our garden and taking one of the thin branches she whipped him with it. Minnie, however always had a soft spot for him no matter what he did. When Mike was a bit older he dressed up as a bandit and with a shotgun rode to Minnie's house which was four miles away and knocked on her door and announced that it was a robbery. Minnie after the initial shock realised that it was Mike and forgave him. Mike and a cousin of ours Max who had come to stay for a holiday conspired to dip two of our kittens in water. They then went to my mother and said that they had just saved them from drowning due to the cruelty of Mendel and another cousin, Hymie who everyone called "Pappala". My mother was shocked and laid into Mendel and Hymie. Four years later Mike confessed to my mother and she was naturally disgusted with him and refused to speak to him for a whole week.

To get back to our house. Outside, we had a well which had natural spring water of wonderful quality. A bucket was lowered on a rope and the water was brought up which was crystal clear and cold. All day the local Tswana people would line up to use the well and carry the water away with buckets balanced on their heads. Years later when we were living in Johannesburg, we heard that the well had dried up. Our toilet was a hundred metres from the house and was six feet deep with a wooden box seat. Of course we had to use a candle at night for illumination. We had paraffin lamps in the house as well as candles for lighting. When our bookkeeper Mr. Mortimer left us Mike had to take over. My dad could be very impatient and I remember him once shouting at Mike that he was too slow and that he (Dad) had already arrived at a total for a column of figures. He was a very clever man in this

respect. One of our back rooms was used to store food for the horses and cows.

I was born four years after Mike and I cannot ever remember my Dad picking me up and hugging or kissing me. Mendel was the third sibling and is four years younger than me, he was my Dad's favorite and he was always lifted up to sit on his lap. We all loved him as he was so sweet and good looking. By the time he was six and before he started school at this age, he could already count to one hundred. The two of us used to walk to school together. Towards the end of his first year at school the regional inspector came to do his annual check up. The day of his arrival, Mendel decided not to go. The teacher asked me where he was and I replied that he was sitting under a tree some distance from the school. One of the biggest boys at the school, Bertie Cloete was dispatched to bring Mendel in, which he did - on his back. But Mendel ran off again and went home. Nevertheless Mendel was promoted to standard two, skipping two classes. Mendel and I were always doing things together like going to the library.

Ethel, my dearest sister is eight years younger than me. During my early years my Mom sent me to stay with my aunt Minnie who lived near Taungs station, some four miles from our home. There was another school with a teacher whom my mother considered to be better than the local one. Thereafter, I was sent to a convent in Klerksdorp for eighteen months and after that to boarding school in Kimberley so I missed out on Ethel's company for quite awhile, in total. I hope that Ethel will write her own memories of her early life during this period. What I do remember is that Ethel in her early childhood had legs that were quite bowed but they straightened out as she grew and everyone admired them for their beauty. I also remember that as a very young girl she went through a phase of crying continuously. This after a time really irritated me, and one day, I could not take it any more so in a fit of rage and temper I spat down her throat and she was instantly cured. I was a real bitch and hope that by now she has forgiven me. In later years when I was about sixteen I returned from Johannesburg for a stay in Kimberley and Ethel immediately commented that I had such big nostrils - so she got her revenge. From then on we have been so close and all her children are as dear to me as my own.

I want to carry on about my memories of Taungs. It had a post office and a Magistrates Court run by a Mr. Winstanley. A doctor who also doubled as a dentist and pulled out teeth when necessary. Two tennis courts, a library (as mentioned) and a second General Dealer store run by a family of the name; James. Opposite us lived an English family - the Shepherds. Their house had a lovely garden with a dam which was filled from a bore hole utilising a windmill. My father took Mike to the dam one day and ordered him to jump in and take his first swimming lesson which he promptly did. He mastered the rudiments immediately. The Shepherds had two grown sons who farmed in the region but I did not see much of them. The Harts river was very close to our house and we all went there for swimming in the summer; one spot was called "Sandgat Beach", one as 'Langgat' and a third as "Diepgat", (Sandhole, Longhole and Deephole respectively). My late cousin Maxie who was my age came on holiday one year and we used to soak pillow slips in the water and then run with them until they filled with air. We held them tightly with the air trapped inside and used them as flotation devices when jumping into the fast flowing water which took us quite far down the river.

Some more about Taungs village. There was a boarding house run by a family; Damelin, who had two sons, Wally and Oscar. Wally was my boyfriend when I was very young. I was devastated at the age of six when his family decided to move to Johannesburg as we had promised each other that we would get married one day. In later life Mendel got to know the Damelin family when he moved to Johannesburg and he and Wally became great friends. Wally never got married. Perhaps he did not find another Pearl.

I learned to play tennis in Taungs where we had a very active social life. The O' Reilly's who lived near us had a gramophone record player and we used to dance to whatever tunes they had. Another O' Reilly had a General Dealer store as well as a Mr. Spitz who had the fourth - which I thought was the best. He used to keep lovely sweets and I remember the nigger balls which seemed to last forever and cost a penny for four. Mrs. Spitz had a sister, a Miss Friedland, who came to Taungs from Johannesburg for holidays with

...her two children, Sylvia and Harold and at one stage actually lived in Taungs for a short while. We all became friendly.

Why all these people came to Taungs Station and Taungs Village I will never know. The O'Reillys came from Ireland and were Catholics, the Shepherds came from the U.K. but I do not remember them going to any church. The Renous were Seven Day Adventists who had their own minister a Mr. Cooper. The Jews came from Latvia and Lithuania, but the Spitz's came from England. Taungs Station was quite busy with trains coming in and out a few times a day as the station was on the main line to Botswana and Rhodesia. The train to Rhodesia was called the Rhodesian Express. Taungs Station was a more up market area than Taungs Village.

Auntie Minnie, my mother's sister and Lewis the eldest son by my dad's first marriage, were married. My dad's son became his brother - in - law and my cousins Rachel (Ray), Max (Mottela) and Hymie (Pappala) were also my niece and nephews. Minnie had a big house and she was very meticulous about its upkeep. We were always very close and I lived there for awhile (as previously mentioned) where I went to school. I used to walk home from school with Ray and Max and they would let me get ahead of them, as I was about to go through the gate to the garden, Ray would give me shove with her bum and knock me out of the way, which forced me to go through last. While I am on this theme, I must mention something about my favorite nephew from the first generation of nieces and nephews. Keep in mind that one of my nieces, Ann Shapiro, is older than me. I am speaking about Dov who with his sister Lulu are the children of Hyman and Dinah. Anyway, Max and Rachel were invited to stay for a few days at their house in Kimberley. Lewis thought that it would be a good idea if I went along as well, so we duly took the train to Kimberley. I was eight at the time and Dov was three. On arrival Max who loved to tease, took Dov aside and told him that I was an uninvited guest, Dov then took up a stick and tried to hit me while shouting to all and sundry that I was an "uninvited guest". I have long since forgiven Dov and he has always been so kind and loving to me for as long as I can remember.

years later, on Guy Fawkes night, while Morris Edelman was staying with us we made fireballs with hessian soaked in paraffin and tied with wire. These we threw in the air, all of a sudden a gust of wind seemed to come from nowhere and one of the balls held by Pappala landed on the thatch roof of Minnie's house. All the neighbors came to help us take all the movables from the house. Everything was saved as well as a portion of the building under a metal roof but the building under thatch was destroyed. Minnie and Louis were in Kimberley at the time sorting out their financial affairs as it happened. Fortunately the house was insured and it was later rebuilt.

For our annual holiday we would hire a wagon with a pack of sixteen oxen from the local Africans and move about four miles away to a lovely spot on the Harts River. The river had a nice bank which was like a beach and we camped there for ten days or so. Other families also joined in. One year it rained heavily and we all had to climb into the wagon and cover ourselves with canvas to try and keep dry. It was an awful time for a few hours. Each night we went to an open space, like a village green, and danced and played games including kissing. They were happy days.

To get back to my Dad. When I was about eight I went with him for a few days to his shop in Mokasa to keep him company. A small house was attached to the shop. It had a bedroom, a dining room and a kitchen. His servant used to make a yeast from potatoes from which he used to make bread. I cannot remember in detail what we ate during that week but my dad's favourite was homemade farfel soup plus onions boiled in milk which he or his servant prepared. I also loved it. The local blacks used to sell mealies and sugar cane in season. On Fridays when he came home he would always bring us sugar cane or special boiled sweets as a treat. We always had a stock pile of almonds which were kept in our cellar. Dad had many facets. He could be very kind and also very hard. I remember one night he discovered that Ma had taken ten pounds out of savings to help bringing out uncle Morris Edelman from Latvia to South Africa. Well, he shouted at her all night and the only break came when he stopped the next morning to pick up Mendel and hugged him. But we learnt a great deal from him. Pesach nights were something special. He went through the whole seder first in brew and then translated it into Yiddish - we never finished until about

mid night but we loved it. He was respected by one and all, black and white and when he was on his death bed there was a long queue of people waiting to say farewell to him. The only person who he refused to say good bye to was Morris Bayer the owner of the hotel and bar at Taungs Station because he persisted in selling liquor to Lewis and Isaac who both had drinking problems. His mind was clear right until the time he passed away later that day. We went to Kimberley for his funeral in two cars, with his coffin on top of the one. The rabbi said that I was too young to attend a funeral but my mother wisely insisted that I was mature enough at ten and a half to attend. Thank you Ma. This was 74 years ago. Shortly after Dad died my mother sent Mike to board at Kimberley Boys' High School. Dad had wanted him to make his career in one of the shops. Ethel, my sister, had the hardest time of us all in her youth. She was only two and a half when my dad died. At a very early age she contracted diphtheria, which was then generally fatal and contagious. We were all sent to stay with Minnie while the Doctor and Ethel fought to overcome the situation. After six weeks Ethel was better and we came home. Later, when Mike and I were at boarding school in Kimberley, Ethel contracted Scarlet Fever and Mendel had to stay home in quarantine. Ethel and my mother formed a strong bond and she would be very pleased that Ethel went to live in Israel. My mom always spoke of our land but she never lived long enough to see the State of Israel proclaimed.

My mother had another sister, Harriet who was married to the other Morris Bayer whose father was Ben Bayer who wanted to marry my mother when she became a widow but she decided not to accept his offer. Morris and Harriet lived in Border station on the border of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Later the town of Jan Kempdorp was established adjacent to Border and forty kilometres south of Taungs to cater for the farmers who settled in the area covered by the Vaalharts irrigation scheme. Morris and Harriet owned the hotel and shop in Border, and we all went to stay there on a few occasions. Harriet and her husband were responsible for arranging the marriage of my mother and bringing her out from Latvia. Harriet was a lovely lady and often gave my mom her dresses which she never wanted. She had two daughters, Taubie and Freda and a son Harriet who died at the age of twelve.

At the start of World War Two, Mike joined the Transvaal Scottish Regiment and was sent up North to Egypt to fight the Germans and Italians. He was captured after the Battle of Tobruk, but for many weeks we did not know if he was dead or alive. Isaac, my half brother who was living down at the South Coast, Natal used to listen to a station which broadcast from the Vatican and he heard that Mike was safe. Mendel also joined the South African Airforce and became a navigator. Mom told both of them that if there was no other food available then it would be all right if they ate pork - it was more important to survive. I truly believe that she was one great lady and must be one of the angels in heaven.

Very recently I was visiting my life long friend Ann Solomon who is now eighty six years old and she mentioned that she had met a family by the name of Gerson, one of them said by way of conversation that their grandfather had once told them that he had spent a few days, many years ago in Taungs. This got me thinking; and I then remembered that during the Great Depression my mom's business went insolvent, a Mr. Gerson came from the city to wind it up. He stayed in the house with us. One day he was all alone and he was undressing but our dog Jumbo, refused to let him take off his trousers completely. He barked whenever Gerson wanted to make a move, so the poor man had to sit still on the bed. When we came home we got Jumbo out of the house and Gerson was able to change his clothes. It was hilarious.

Well, I could go on and on, but the above I feel is the main impressions that I have of my early life in Taungs.

Germiston, November , 2003.