

I Could Have Been A Rich Sheep Farmer's Wife Instead Of A Rebbetzin

By Rosemary Abrami



In 1981 (obviously before I left SA) I went on a bus tour to see the Namaqualand flowers.

One of our stops was in Calvinia, where the erstwhile shul had been turned into the town museum.

When our group went inside, I noted a clear outline on one of the walls of where the ark had been and I wanted to take a picture. The chap who turned out to be the curator, said 'no photos' and asked why I wanted to take a picture of a blank wall.

So, I explained that I was Jewish and was interested in the building's history as a shul.

Whereupon he almost fell on my neck and asked how long we would be in town, to which I replied that we were leaving the next morning.

Could I stay a bit longer?

No, the bus would leave without me and I'd be stuck but WHY should I stay?

Well, he wanted to introduce me to a "*ryk skaap boer*" * as a potential shidduch! (must have noticed lack of rings on my left hand).

I asked if said farmer was Jewish and when the answer was negative, I said that I would consider

marrying only a Jewish man but wondered why he wanted to arrange the meeting.

And this was his very interesting response: 'When the Jews were in Calvinia it was a very lively and busy town but since they all left there's nothing'. He hoped that if I married this sheep farmer, I might be able to rebuild a Jewish presence in the town!

Apparently, he had a farm of a gazillion hectares with an appropriate number of sheep, on which was a lovely house, plus a sizable *dorpshuis* where he stayed when came every weekend to attend church.

Hey, maybe I made the wrong decision and could have been the wife of a rich farmer, instead of a rebbetzin but I don't think so. I wonder what ever happened to him and his farm in the intervening years and whether he ever found a Christian woman happy to marry him. And I wonder too what has happened to the Calvinia Museum...

*rich sheep farmer

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**Written by Rosemary Abrami in 2023**

### **A Word About Me:**

Born in Springs to Hyman and Freda Epstein; went to JCE but never taught, instead went into the computer world.

Started as a programmer with what was then ICT (later ICL), moved into teaching programming with them and subsequently helped establish Van Zyl & Pritchard, the computer training-and-placement company.

Married in 1988 to Leo Michel Abrami, who had come to SA to be rabbi at Temple David in Sandton; he was French-born but had moved to the US.

In 1991 he wanted to return to the US and I schlepped along! Since then have lived in Northern and Southern California, Rhode Island and Arizona, first in Tucson, later in Sun City West, in the Greater Phoenix Area.

Officially retired, I run a small business at home [abramibookbindery.com](http://abramibookbindery.com)

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