



Rachel Yanait Ben Tsvi (in white) front row with her husband Yitzhak Ben Tsvi, the second president of the State of Israel on an official visit to the Home. He is standing behind her to the right.

## A FAMILY MEMBER'S CONTRIBUTION TO A LITTLE BIT OF *Israeli* LIFE AND HISTORY

By Suzanne Schwartz

My late, great uncle Harry Schur contributed an initial donation to the building of a retirement home called "Elternheim" in Israel in the early 1950s soon after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

It was the compilation of a series of black and white photographs in a presentation album that brought this fact to my awareness. I found this cherished document, now yellow with age, among other family memorabilia in a cardboard box.

In one of the photos, there was a dedication plaque that had been placed by the entrance to the home. It read "In memory of the late Avraham and Hanna Grossberg, Samuel and Bertha Schur. Their sons, Messrs. S.S. Grossberg, M.B.E. and H. Schur of Bulawayo, South Rhodesia have by their initial donation facilitated the erection of the home." On the cover it said "IRGUN OLEJ MERKAZ EUROPA -ELTERNHEIM -RAMAT CHEN".

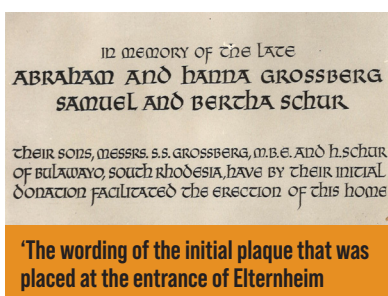
There were no other details to indicate exactly where in Israel it was situated and I wondered

whether it was still in existence? From the photos, I could tell there were no other buildings around and it seemed to be set in a pastoral landscape.

Interestingly, there is a Ramat Chen neighborhood in Netanya where I live and I thought that was where it could possibly be. Yet, when I looked on a map, the name "Elternheim" was nowhere to be found.

*The initial plaque that acknowledged Harry Schur and SS Goldberg had long been removed and the Home were completely unaware that they had been the initial donors.*

Someone told me there was a Ramat Chen neighborhood in Ramat Gan but I thought it was very unlikely because the photos I had indicated that it was out in the country and not in an urban environment.



Yet, I didn't give up trying to uncover the mystery of this home. It was a 'shot in the dark' email to the Massuot International Institute for Holocaust Studies situated in Tel Yitzchak near Netanya that was the breakthrough. They must have passed on my email with the photos to the right place. About two weeks later, I received a warm email from Mrs Devorah Haberfeld. She introduced herself as the Chairperson of the Association of Israelis (formerly Irgun Olej Mercaz Europa) of Central European origin.

"We received with excitement," she wrote," the photographs of Pinchas Rosen Parents Home (the one in the photos you sent us) in Ramat Chen (Ramat Gan). And I am more than glad to inform you that our two parent houses in Ramat Chen exist and are flourishing. Of course it is difficult to recognize since the building has undergone several renovations and adjustments that adapted it to the modern era.

Needless to say we will be happy to host you and show you the parents' house as it looks today."

It was such a pleasant surprise to receive this email and to know that the Parents Home, albeit with a

name change from Elterheim to Pinchas Rosen, was still going strong. Also to discover that it was situated in the Ramat Chen neighborhood of Ramat Gan after all.

The original plaque that acknowledged Harry Schur and SS Goldberg had long been removed and the Home was completely unaware that they had been the initial donors. It was the photographic testimony from the album in my personal possession that brought this to light. It was a full circle moment for me to be able to pay tribute and give honor to my



Residents celebrating Shabat in the succa of the Home



A street view of the Home when it opened in 1955 in the Ramat Chen neighbourhood of Ramat Gan

great uncle Harry Schur and S.S. Goldberg whose charitable act had sown the seed for this home to be built and to still be playing a role in Israeli society today.

Since I had never heard of Pinchas Rosen, I proceeded to do some research. I then realized that he was a key figure in many ways in the early days of Israel's fledgling existence.

Pinchas Rosen was born Felix Pinchas Rosenblüth (later Rosen) in Berlin, Germany in 1887. He became a passionate Zionist after reading Herzl's book *Altneuland* and never wavered from the cause. He was Chairman of the Zionist Federation of Germany from 1920 to 1923, and eventually migrated to Palestine, then a British Mandate, in 1926 where he practised as a lawyer. His first wife Annie Lesser did not share in his same dedication and refused to join him. After their divorce and Hitler's rise to power in the early 1930s, she relocated to London with their two children, Hans and Dina where she remained to the end of her life. Rosen remarried Hadassah Perlman and their daughter Rivka, aged seven years, tragically died of cancer.

In 1950, he married for a third time to Johanna Rosenfeld.

As one of the 37 signatories to the scroll of Israel's Independence Declaration in May, 1948, he commissioned Mordechai Beham, a young Tel Aviv-based lawyer, to word the text.

Serving as Minister of Justice in eight of Israel's first nine cabinets, he, in addition, turned down offers to be elected Israel's President on three separate occasions.

Irgun Olej Mercaz Europa (now called the Association of Israelis of Central European origin) was founded by Pinchas Rosen and it was this organization that established Elternheim, now the Pinchas Rosen Parents Home, to which my great uncle Harry Schur along with S.S. Grossberg, contributed the initial donation. Pinchas Rosen also helped found the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra.

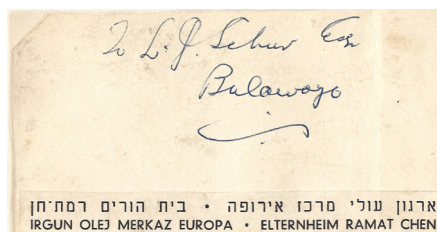
In 1973, he was awarded the Israel Prize for his contributions to Israeli jurisprudence, and five years later, in May 1978, he passed away at the age of 91.

In February, 2024, my husband, Lionel and I visited the Pinchas Rosen Parents Home and were warmly received and shown around. I couldn't help but beam with pride at the thought of being associated with a family member whose charitable act, at the very beginning of Israel's establishment, had given rise to an institution still going strong, while serving the needs of the aged members of Israeli society.

In these dark times, I draw strength from the acts of courage and determination that visionaries such as Pinchas Rosen and my great uncle Harry Schur displayed when Israel was barely in existence and

hanging on by a thread after the Holocaust and the British Mandate years. More than seven decades later, I felt so privileged to be able to experience the fruits of their indefatigable works and to be encouraged by all those who over the years had taken this project and built it into the magnificent institution that it is today. I think we underestimate who we are.

Israeli society is strong, resilient and not afraid to do hard things. The proof is in the incredible country that Israel has become. We have come a long way since then and I draw strength from looking back and learning from those early pioneers. ■



Harry Schur passed away suddenly on June 3rd, 1955 before the Home's completion so the album was addressed to his brother, my grandfather LJ Schur

#### EDITOR'S NOTE:

The Vera Solomons Retirement Center in Kfar Saba, which advertises regularly in our *ESRA Magazine*, was also founded by the Irgun Olej Mercaz Europa. This nonprofit organization was indeed a significant contributor to the early retirement homes in Israel.