

My Tel-Aviv: Jaffa, the First Years



The House in Giveat-Aliyah & Our Family

Almost everyone has his or her own Tel-Aviv. For those born there, it is as obvious as the fact that the sun sets opposite the promenade.

For those who come here from afar, it is an indefinite relationship. There are those who must get to Tel-Aviv for work, errands and other tasks that compel one to come to the City that Never Stops. Inhabitants of Jerusalem arrive for a quickie, and return promptly to escape the humidity, the soot and their inability to find their way around a free, dynamic, secular domain. There are those who were locals once, but not anymore. These are complex relationships that embody indefinite emotions. There are lovers who will never consummate their love.

There are the foreign workers, the orthodox Jews, the youngsters, the sons and daughters of the community, the elderly, the soldiers, the Arabs, the tourists, the beggars, the eccentric and the whacky. They are all present in the abundance that is typical of this amazing city.

Jaffa – Shikun Aliyah (= housing project for new immigrants), the 1950s

My Tel-Aviv begins in Jaffa. The Jaffa chapter of our family history does not include me, as I was simply not there yet. Jaffa was our home until 1954, and then we moved to Yad-Eliyahu. My parents decided to have me only in 1958, so everything written here comes from hearsay, not from personal experience – my apologies.

On January 20, 1949, my parents Shmuel and Genia, with my eldest sister Devorah, born in Nicosia, arrived in Jaffa. The chapter that includes Europe, the Holocaust and Cyprus had ended but was not yet over, and they found themselves in an abandoned Arab house in Jebelliyah – Giveat-Aliyah, Jaffa. On the second floor in a house overlooking the sea, near the house of the French Ambassador and the adjacent

garden. They shared the kitchen and toilet with the Mischler family. Pella, my mother's elder sister, lived with them. The correct address was number 7, 150 Street, Jaffa (probably 50 Street). You will not find such an address today. Look for Valencia Street at the corner of Mendès France Street on one side, and for Yas'ur Street on the other side. We lived right opposite with a view to the sea. The house still stands and is undergoing frequent alterations, with new, well-groomed houses popping up on all sides. Apparently, the house where we lived has never decided where it is heading. Just recently I passed through there (5, Mendès France Street) and once again in February 2014, and then, for the first time, I noticed an old street sign from the past with the inscription "Rehov Tarshish" in Hebrew, English, and even a separate sign in Arabic.

The vicinity is undergoing a tremendous development process. The French with their flag are still there. The sea has remained in the same direction and there is nothing like living by the sea, provided you have air conditioning. In America they already had air conditioners back then, and that may have been the reason why our aunt Pella went there eventually, as she had always kept a clean, white handkerchief handy to mop up the beads of sweat. If I ever met Willis Carrier, the man who invented air conditioning, in my dreams, I would have kissed him and held him in a lingering embrace. America was always attractive to many people, for many reasons.



27, Valencia Street, Jaffa



Once No.5, Tarshish Street and today No.5, Mendès France Street, and only Jaffa and the Sea have remained in the Same Place



Fish, Drugs, the Peres Center for Peace & Innovation, Money & the Police – Jaffa Today

Fish restaurants teeming with ravenous diners on Saturdays. Aliyah Beach after a meticulous, preserving restoration, and the Peres Center for Peace & Innovation attempting to fit into a rough neighborhood. There is a lot of money in Jaffa. Money has no smell (*Pecunia non olet* in Latin, meaning "money does not stink"). Apparently, it has no address either. They say that some of this money comes from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. Today's Jaffa has wonderful food: fish, hummus, grilled meats and even a humble serving of Falafel. There are other servings, mainly white in color, and funny names. The movie "Ajami" – which is the name of the adjacent neighborhood – provides a complete explanation of the processes taking place in Jaffa today. An

inexplicable mixture of Arabs, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Border Police, ISA (Israel Security Agency – SHABAK) and Police. Eventually, it is always the Police or Border Police that arrive on the scene, and I wonder why.

1949 – My father Shmuel became a policeman, personal ID number 2931. After graduating from the first policeman training course in Shfar'am, my father was assigned to the Police Headquarters on 9, HaShahar Street. After that he was assigned to the police station on Yehuda HaLevi Street and finally to the National Headquarters at 14, HaRakevet Street. My mother, Genia Golda née Halpern, remains a devoted housewife as a prime occupation.



Police Constable Shmuel Liderman, Personal ID Number 2931, 1949

Pella Pessia, my mother's elder sister, traveled to America. Her sweetheart, Robin Barry, a survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau, whom she had met at the displaced persons camp in Italy, was waiting for her in the Land of Unlimited Opportunities. The exact date was June 25, 1952 – the day when my blond sister, Erella, came into the world – still in Jaffa.

So Who Else did we have in Our Family Account?

On Shimshon HaGibor Street, at the very heart of Tel-Aviv, lived Renya Garbash, my mother's twin sister with her family. At 14, Zamenhof Street lived my mother's uncle, Israel Halpern with his family. They had arrived in Palestine from Lublin before the

Holocaust. Leah Abramowitz, my mother's cousin, lived on HaHavatzetlet Street in Ramat HaTayasim, Yad-Eliyahu. We will get there later on.

Our father, Shmuel, had no remaining relatives. Everyone had gone to heaven or more precisely, buried almost alive in the vicinity of Wolyn (Volhynia), except Noah Liderman and his family from the north – not the northern part of Tel-Aviv, mind you, but Neshet, Tel-Hannan in northern Israel. Yakov Ridnik was also alive and had a family – but in Paris, France. Our mother always said that it is good for everyone that there are Jews living overseas.



Genia Liderman, No.7, 150 Street, Giveat-Aliyah, Jaffa

My Sisters Devorah & Erella Recall & Reminisce

Devorah Shakhnai, my eldest sister, remembers a few things from Jaffa, despite the fact that sixty years have passed. She remembers the events that took place yesterday in Hadera, at Hillel Yaffe hospital, a little less vividly. Erella Levinstein, my little blond sister, remembers much less, practically nothing, as age matters but with a little prompting she also manages to recall a few pictures from the past in Jaffa.

Food is a well-known recipe for reminiscing. You do not always have to be precise about the details. She remembers the neighbors in the apartment, in the kitchen and even in the toilet. They were the Mischler family. Father Felix, Mother Leah with the beautiful big eyes and son Moishale who always, always ate everything nicely, leaving nothing – while Erella did not. Today, Moishale is in America, he is very, very thin and has an Elvis hairdo. Erella, my sister, also lives in Hadera, and so the original inhabitants of Jaffa have dispersed.

So we are back with the food of Jaffa and to the story that if the girl refused to eat, Mother would pinch her nose (where was Yitzhak Kadman¹ in those days?) and that worked wonders and the blond girl that looked just like Jitka, our mother's sister that

¹Founder and long-serving chairman of the Israel National Council for the Child
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel_National_Council_for_the_Child)

perished in the Holocaust, would open her mouth and eat. Food was a very important thing. The Holocaust will never return and Jewish children will not go hungry again. Have you heard about the Gidiala apple? That, according to Devorah, was the name of the red candy apple on the wooden stick that children loved to lick. It always seemed to me that all you have to do was just open the cellophane wrapping, give it a few good licks and that's it. I thought no one really ate this thing all the way through. Was I wrong? There is also a rooster version but it is not the same. The legitimate version is the one with the apple.



From right to left: Erella, Father, Mother & Devorah Liderman, Jaffa, 1950s



There is nothing like the love of our mother with the bracelet on her hand

The Bread and the Banknote Gone with the Wind all the way to the Sea

Devorah recalls how she was sent to the grocery store to buy bread with a green banknote when suddenly the wind swept it, and she chased it down the slope and succeeded in catching it again almost at the waterline. According to logic and my initial calculations, it was probably a banknote from the Bank Leumi series, probably a green 1 Lira note, although half a Lira, namely – 500 Pruta, also makes sense. Who knows how much a loaf of bread cost around 1954? On second more logical and professional thought (and my sister confirmed this through prompted memory), it was probably one of those smaller notes of fractional currency that looked like the play money in Monopoly, issued in denominations of 50, 100 and even 250 Pruta. Perhaps it was Neuman's 100 Pruta "blue fractional currency" mini banknote with the reversed signature? If you find such a banknote in crisp condition, it will be worth more than 3,000 green dollars in cash.



Green 100 Pruta Banknote, signed by Kaplan & Zagagi, State of Israel, Legal Tender Proposal, Paper Fractional Currency series

"In 1952, a decision was made to continue issuing, in addition to the banknotes and coins already in use in those days, paper fractional currency, to save on metal. The banknotes were printed in several versions and in different colors and carried the signatures of Eliezer Kaplan, Mordechai Zagagi, Levi Eshkol and Avraham Ne'eman." Thanks to Igal Arkin and his book on banknotes and coins in Israel.

In my view, the paper fractional money makes an instructive and intriguing chapter in the history of the Israeli banknote world. I believe these items were documented much less extensively than others – and that is a shame. I think these are the only banknotes of the State of Israel produced entirely here, from beginning to end. That could explain the amount of variations in colors, numbering and signatures. Since then, and even before, Israeli money was imported directly from foreign countries. The collection of the late Avraham Birenbaum included the most extensive and diversified selection in every sense of the word. Luckily for us, or more precisely – luckily for the northern regular serviceman, this collection remains in Israel for the time being, rather than emigrating overseas.

If you wish to view those banknotes on the Bank of Israel website, [go ahead](#).

The Crystal & Snow Ball

Our neighbor in Jaffa, Felix Mischler, was a seaman and Erella remembers that he once gave her a crystal ball containing a hypnotizing wonder: snow falling into water. The Arab house still stands with quite a few alterations. Erella still remembers the floor of hand-painted tiles, the high ceilings, the long wooden window frames with the metal trims, even the seller of Lupini beans in newspaper cones. Gan Tamar (Tamar Garden) is another memory from the past.

Eating an Apple in the Garden of the French Consulate

The sea was very close, a matter of just a few minutes, and if you wish – maybe just one minute. All you had to do to get wet was roll down Jaffa slope. The Arabs in Jaffa

may have wanted to throw us into the sea, but it is a fact that this never happened. Besides, there were probably lifeguards on duty, as they were always there, even before my parents and other Holocaust survivors arrived in Jaffa. The lifeguards, too, were Arab.

Devorah remembers the garden near the consulate, and Father returning from the Police and going together to the garden where Father would peel an apple with a knife so that the peel being removed formed a spiral shape, like an ornament for the Sukkah, round and round the apple and without tearing half way through. He would then cut the apple into four equal quarters and finally, would remove the seeds along with the core attached to them, so that each quarter apple had a small hollow where the seeds had been. Interestingly, many years after Jaffa, our father never changed his method of peeling, cutting and eating an apple. Does the manner of eating an apple mean anything? Tell me which kind of apple you prefer and I will tell you who your doctor is... Whenever I deal with apples, I remember the English saying "An apple a day keeps the doctor away". I once heard a hypnotizing explanation about the benefits of apples and why it is seriously wrong to eat or, God forbid chew their seeds. All rights reserved to our uncle Robin Barry who lived with our aunt Pella in the Big Apple of the USA. Today they are all dwellers of earth at the cemetery in Quiryat-Shaul, not far from my parents.

I love apples but prefer tomatoes. A tomato is a crazy sexual turn-on and Ben-Yehuda was a genius for names². Eating an apple by biting the top, like the logo of the Apple Company, is very sexy, but to me it is not sufficiently legitimate, although it has something very primordial. As far as I am concerned, an apple always goes together with a knife, and I am not a Moroccan. Was the story of the apple and all of its symbolic implications only the consequence of the conduct of Adam and Eve?

The Uphill Start near Donolo Hospital, Dajani Hospital, Professor Goldblum and Polio & Painted Tin Cans with Flowers

Devorah also remembers the downhill road from Donolo hospital. She returned to that road years later, when she learned to drive during her military service, and the uphill starts were a kind of return to the places of her childhood. Devorah also remembers the overflowing manholes and the sewage flowing freely through the streets of Jaffa, and consequently – Polio. The painful images of the paralyzed children with the metal

² The Hebrew word for "Tomato", Agvanyah, may be interpreted as having sexual connotations.

braces along their legs, and everyone saying that it all came from the sewage of Jaffa. Incidentally, the Polio vaccines used in Israel are also associated with Jaffa, with Dajani hospital and Professor Nathan Goldblum the virologist, who made Israel one of the leaders in vaccine use. [More about Nathan Goldblum](#).

Devorah also told us how our mother collected tin cans of preserved foods and pickles and used them for various plants, not before she painted them on the outside. Strangely enough, I did the same with various plants and pots, not in Jaffa, without knowing anything about it. Another proof of genetic power and "roots" and all that. Itzik Ozeri always told me that you cannot straighten a crooked tree trunk, but I prefer the proverb by Newton's brother that says that the apple does not fall far from the tree, so we are back with the apples again.



Dr. Ehrlich, the one from the Street Name in Jaffa, on a German 200 Mark Banknote

Doctors and Street Names in Jaffa

Over the years I heard a few names and terms from Jaffa of those days, and I have no idea why they linger in my mind. Maybe because I heard them from my parents in the context of their Jaffa repertoire, which they never abandoned, and which was always delivered as a proud statement, wishing to convey the message that "It was not all roses for us, too," – and that was that. I heard the name Dr. Ehrlich, which is a street name, but only now do I know who Dr. Paul Ehrlich, the Jewish recipient of the Nobel Prize was. His portrait even adorns a German 200 Mark banknote. If you show me one Israeli collector (except Rafi Dvir) who was aware of this information, I will invite him or her, at my expense, to have ice cream at Andrey's in Jaffa. He/she may also opt for frozen yoghurt plus fruit spread on top. Another option is Kanafeh pastry at Mutran's, and for your information, the color of Kanafeh has nothing to do with carrots, as I once thought.

Apparently, in Jaffa of those days, doctors' names were very common, in various places. Donolo, Dajani, Ehrlich and possibly others. Devorah says, for some reason, that it was always our father who would take her and Erella to the doctor when it was

necessary. Sounds a bit strange, but childhood memories contain many intriguing elements and it would be interesting to see what a psychologist, as opposed to a historian, would have recorded in this context. Dr. Berger, our family doctor, maintains that men are advised to always consult a female psychologist, and I must look into it sometime.



Aunt Pella with my sister Devorah and Cousin Yehiel

Photographs tell a Story – but not Enough

We are lucky to have a few photographs and the stories our parents told us later on. Devorah remembers the ornamental fabrics that were used to adorn the walls of the apartment, and there is even one photograph where you can see those tapestries. Devorah remembers how once she coveted the flowers on those fabrics, so she cut them out for a keepsake, and how our mother was saddened at the sight of the flowers and the holes in the fabric. Some of the neighbors from Jaffa accompanied us, and I remember the garment sellers at the Carmel Market who were our neighbors in Jaffa and subsequently moved to Bat-Yam, and one day they even wanted to sell coins. After my family moved to Yad-Eliyahu, we used to visit the Mischler family that had remained in Jaffa and would subsequently choose Holon as their new address.

Holon is nothing like Tel-Aviv but is probably better than Bat-Yam, although I would not vouch for that, and I wonder why. They say that the explanation is simple and you only have to see who the mayor is, and all the rest is just peanuts. Who will place a bet on the fate of the overweight mayor who wishes to become the prime minister of all of us and once, not so long ago, he was like a brother to Yair of Lassalle Street and the Yesh Atid party?

Real Estate in Millions or Billions?

We went to Jaffa a few times, to visit the old neighborhood and find out what's happening there today. It looked different every time and never made me want to stay there for good, and I wonder why. Last time I visited I saw very substantial real-estate changes all around the area. Some fantastic figures were tossed around, and I thought

they may be talking in Italian Lire (the pre-Euro currency of Italy). Once I saw two butchered wild boar, following a nocturnal hunting trip, in a nearby courtyard. There are no wild boar in Jaffa for certain, but there are already signs of capitalist swinishness. I also need an enlightening explanation – apart from what I can understand myself – regarding the Peres Center for Peace & Innovation, which sits there as if in a kind of anticipation.

Right opposite the Peres Center for Peace & Innovation, at 130 Kedem Street, stands what, for me, is the nicest huge restaurant in Ajami. Parking is always available and the view is great, the service is OK, they have air conditioning and prices are reasonable. They should pay more attention to restroom fittings and accessories. The place is known as Abu-Nassar and even Hinawi joined them recently.

Famous Individuals who were born in Jaffa but are No Longer There

The reconstruction of one's personal past may always receive external support the moment someone who's marginally famous tells something, and then you connect to it. For example, Haim Vishniya, who loved and was loved by Yona Galizki. Haim, who was intended to be the best antibiotic for Bibi (Benjamin Netanyahu), was born in Jaffa, as was Hanna Aslau (that is how our mother always called Hanna Laslau) who always reminisces about life in Jaffa with her parents and family, as well as Azoulai from the music business. Haim Ramon, Yona Elian and Hanna Laslau are an inseparable part of Jaffa. Take one half of Haim Ramon, add a quarter of Yossi Sarid and a similar measure of Benny Begin for a proper political balance, and you will have the ultimate leader. We can always recruit Ehud (not Ehud Olmert) to handle national security with the brown pilots' jacket and matching sunglasses. In that case, Bibi can be an assistant and spokesman for foreign affairs in English. Also, Bibi will not divide Jerusalem. Is Jaffa divided?



The House in Givat-Aliyah & Our Family

Photo album from a family excursion in the area

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