

Pruning the Super Family Tree.

September, 2008

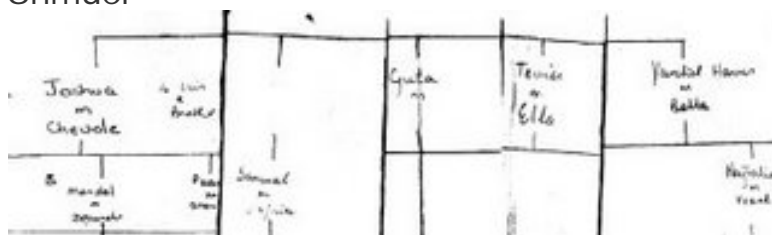
Chaim Freedman

(Click on documents and photos to enlarge)

When I began to research the history of the Super family in the mid-1970's to trace the family tree, the contemporary generations of the family living in Australia and England were the only members of the family known to me. Whilst I knew that there were many relatives in South Africa and some in Canada, there had been no contact with them for many years. Indeed, even when contact was re-established, the diverse branches of the family were not aware of the exact relationships between them.

In the mid 1980's Norman Super, living in Melbourne and originally from South Africa, sent me a family tree compiled by elderly relatives in South Africa whilst attending a family celebration, probably in the early 1970's. This clarified many connections and as each new source came to light, the family tree began to take shape. The various branches were assumed to belong to a common trunk, with a common ancestor named Shmuel. At the time archival records in the Former Soviet Union were not available to confirm this theoretical tree, based on oral history. With the fall of that State valuable and relevant material pertaining to the family was discovered in Latvia.

Shmuel



The above is a condensed version of the tree.

This tree shows five siblings as the children of Shmuel Super. One of the siblings is indicated by a blank space above the name of "Samuel m Daphnie". These were supposed to be the parents of Rabbi Yitskhak Yaakov Super of Melbourne. "Daphnie" was not his mother's name; it was Khaya Minna. Apparently the elders of the family in South Africa who put together this tree did not know the name of this presumed sibling of the ancestors of their respective branches of the family.



Rabbi Yitskhak Yaakov Super, Evercreech, England c.1912

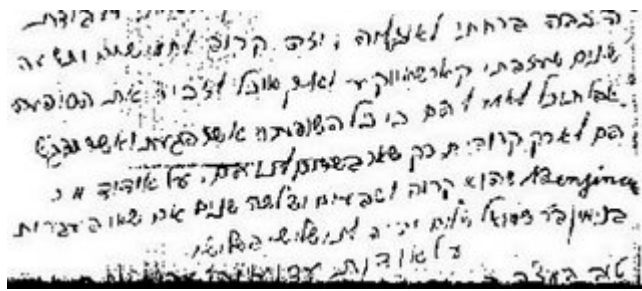
The earliest name known to the Australian Supers was Shmuel, the father of Rabbi Yitskhak-Yaakov. He and his wife Khaya-Minna lived in the small town of Korsovka now called Karsava, in Latvia. The region was until the Russian Revolution of 1917 part of the Russian Empire in the eastern part of Vitebsk Gubernia (government) known as Latgale (or Lettland). Since Yitskhak Yaakov had left his parents' home in Korsovka at the age of twenty-one and settled in England, he had little opportunity to hear from his father information about his family's origins, nor did he get to know his many relatives who lived in the neighbouring town Lutzin, where in fact he had been born. Such was also the case for his brother Yosef who also settled in England at an early age.



Khaya-Minna, Fruma and Shmuel Super c.1905, Korsovka, Latvia.

In a letter (in Hebrew) written in 1960 Yitskhak-Yaakov Super answers his son Rabbi Dr. Arthur Saul Super, then living in South Africa, who asks him about the relationships among the family Arthur met in South Africa. Yitskhak Yaakov explains that he left his home town as a young teenager in order to

study and then worked as a Shokhet in a number of towns until he left Latvia aged twenty-one:



"It is nearly fifty-nine years since I left Korsovka and how can I remember the Supers, but you can tell them that all the family who you met or who you will meet are not only relatives, but are flesh and blood to us. About Mr. Benjamin who is close to seventy three years old, if his name in Hebrew is Benyamin son of Reb Shmuel Sholem, he would be our second cousin."

At the time of my original research I did not know who this person was and so made no use of this information until 2003 when I received photographs of many of the tombstones in the Jewish cemetery in Korsovka, including that of Shmuel-Sholem.

One earlier generation of the Australian and English branch was available, derived from the Korsovka tombstone inscription of Shmuel Super, Yitskhak-Yaakov's father. A photograph of the grave was sent to Australia by Shmuel's son Khatzkel (his full name was Yekhezkel and he also appears in the picture) taken after the death of Shmuel in Korsovka in 1928. Since Hebrew names appearing on a tombstone also include the father's name, it was established that Shmuel's father was called Yosef-Yehoash. The name Yehoash is very rarely used, although its Biblical origin stems from the righteous King of Judah, Yehoash who repaired and rededicated the Temple in Jerusalem.



Rabbi Arthur-Saul Super (Avraham-Shaul) told me of an oral tradition that there was an earlier ancestor, Rabbi Tuviah (Teviah) Super who he had heard had lived in Lutzin in the early nineteenth century. He had also been told that his ancestors had been Soferim (scribes) for many generations. This was in fact the origin of their surname, Super being a Russian corruption of the term Sofer, or it's Aramaic version Safra, being the usual designation of the official town scribe: 'Safra Demata'.

Yet another item of oral history told to Arthur by relatives in South Africa was that an ancestor had written a Sefer Torah, which he had presented to the Baron Ginzburg who was in fact his cousin!

These sparse oral traditions formed the basis for extrapolating theoretical lines of descent. Firstly a record was found of one Teviah Super who held the position of Gabbai of the Great Synagogue in Lutzin. He was listed as one of the notables of Lutzin in "Yahadut Latvia" (Israel 1953), "*Tevi Super, Gabbai of the Great Synagogue*".

במלמדת : מנשה חזיזית בן הרב ר' ישראל אברהם טהיזית מפריל ; דוד מנוב , אחיו
 חיים מנוב ; סבי : משה גבאי ביזכני ; הסחר העיקר פלקא פלקוב (פלקא בנימינס) ;
 בניה אליוו פלקוב (אלי פלקיס) ; מאשע פלקוב (מאשע פלקיס) חסיד תבריי ; נסע רבינוביץ

This reference did not indicate when "Tevi" lived. However Magistrate records from 1897 found by Latvian researcher Aleksanders Feigmanis refer to a dispute involving Teviah Super Gabbai of the Alt Shule Mankov". So the above reference to "Tevi Super" did not refer to an early ancestor of the entire Super

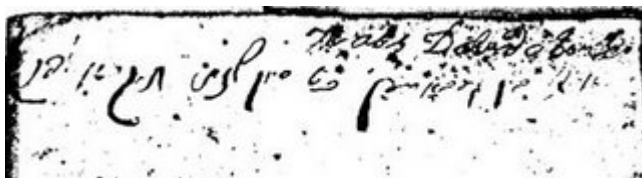
family, mentioned by Rabbi Arthur Super according to family oral history in South Africa.

A connection with Tuviah/Tevi was thought to have been discovered in a book that had belonged to Yitskhak-Yaakov Super, thought to have been passed from earlier generations. This book was presented to me by my mother-in-law Edna Berliner (daughter of Yitskhak-Yaakov), but the significance of the inscriptions inside the front and rear covers eluded me for many years.

On the inside front cover is a faded inscription in Hebrew that is barely decipherable as a person's name written in Hebrew. Also in Latin characters appears the surname 'Lichtenstein'. I thought that it was possible that there was a relationship with the rabbinic Lichtenstein family that flourished for several generations in Latvia.

On the inside back cover is an inscription in Yiddish and Hebrew:
"I was born on the 29th of Sivan in the year 5561", the Hebrew year corresponding to 1801.

Above this inscription appear two words in very faded Russian script. The pages were photocopied and thereby it was possible to adjust the intensity of light and magnification so as to highlight the inscriptions. Whilst not all the letters were discernable, the missing one could be interpolated. The Russian script was a name: **"Toviah Davidovich"**



I thought that this was the Tuviah Super referred to by Arthur Super. Not only had his birth date been established, 1801, but his Russian patronymic provided the name of his father: David.

Based on this information, which in hindsight was tenuous, given that the book may not have belonged to the Super family at all, but had simply passed into their hands, I theorized that the sequence of the generations could be put together. Since Shmuel was born about 1850, his father Yosef-Yehoash would have been born about 1825. Since "Toviah Davidovich" was born in 1801, I thought he must have been the father of Yosef-Yehoash. This should then make David the common ancestor of the various siblings shown on Norman Super's tree.

I then sought earlier ancestors. Once again family tradition gave clues in this direction: Firstly the origin of the surname having been derived from the function of a number of ancestors as Soferim (scribes); secondly the supposed relationship with the family of the Baron Ginzburg.

A history of the Ginzburg family (Toldot Mishpakhat Ginzburg, David Maggid, St.Petersburg 1899) traces many families either descended from or related to the Ginzburgs. Study of the relatives of the first Baron Ginzburg, namely Baron Yosef Ginzburg (1812-1878) reveals the family of his paternal grandmother Tybel She was a daughter of Rabbi Uri Sofer of Vilna (according to the 1784 Vilna census Tybel /Touba was Uri's wife), who held the position of official scribe to that community, bearing the title 'Safrá Demata'. Such a functionary was skilled in handwriting Torah scrolls, Mezuzot, wedding and divorce certificates, and any other official documents required by the Jewish civil governing body, the Kahal. Rabbi Uri Sofer's father Rabbi Yaakov-Gavriel also held this position, as had his father Rabbi Tuviah Sofer and several earlier generations.



Family tree of Rabbi URI Safrá of Vilna.
From 'The history of the Ginzberg Family' 1899.

There is a recurrence in the above family of the names Uri, Tuviah and David.

Tuviah and David struck a bell in relation to the inscription "Toviah Davidovich". Tuviah was also prevalent amongst the Super family of Lutzin. Bearing in mind that Baron Yosef Ginzburg and Yosef-Yehoash Super were, according to their birth dates, of the contemporary generation, and since they were reputed to be cousins (according to that oral tradition telling of the presentation of a Sefer Torah to the Baron), I thought that the familial link was through Rabbi Uri Sofer of Vilna. The common occupation as scribes in both families also correlates between them. Whilst specific records establishing this link were not found, an extensive study of the Ginzburg family tends to preclude any other explanation for the cousin relationship, if it was true. Bearing in mind the dates of each successive generation, appeared that the

Super-Sofer-Ginzburg connection was that David Super (whose name was derived from the patronymic "Davidovich") was a son of Uri Sofer of Vilna. This would have made the Baron Yosef Ginzburg and Yosef-Yehoash Super second cousins. Other sources that include information about the family of Soferim in Vilna are "Kiriah Neemanah" (Finn, Vilna 1860); "Ir Vilna" (Steinshneider, Vilna 1900) and Toldot Hakehilah Haivrit Bevilna (Klausner, Vilna 1935). The information in each of this is more or less consistent. However, in 2003 I acquired copies of the census taken in Vilna in 1765 and in 1784 and discovered that each of these books includes errors in the identities of some of the "Sofer" family.

When the political changes in the former Soviet Union led to the dissolution of that Union, archives were opened to the public and much material about Jewish families was found. A Jewish researcher living in Riga, Aleksanders Feigmanis, was commissioned by a descendant of the Super family, Robert Heyman, to trace records of the family. Feigmanis found a treasure of documents, in particular the "Revizsky Skaza" (Revision Lists, meaning census) for the years 1874 and 1897 for the town of Lutzin and the list from 1897 for Korsovka. The 1874 list from Korsovka appears to have been lost. Many family groups including several hundred members of the Super family appeared, allowing the compilation of the family tree.



Cenš Lutzin 1926
 Map of Lutzin region, Latvia
 Taken from "Pilsētu apraksti" the 1926 census.
 Lutzin = Lutzin, Karava = Korsovka

The following is the census entry for "Super Yankel Shmuilov" and his family, including his Falkov grandchildren. This person was the "Yanchiel Havies" who appeared on Norman Super's chart.

№	Имя (полностью), имя и отчество или ФИО, если это известно.	Дата рождения (или дата смерти)	Место рождения (или место смерти)	Семейное положение	Служба, воинская часть	Служба, воинская часть	Служба, воинская часть	Служба, воинская часть
1	Суперъ Яковъ Шмуель- евичъ	20.08.1870	Славя	Суперъ	Славя	Славя	Славя	Славя
2	Суперъ Яковъ Яковлевичъ	20.08.1870	Славя	Суперъ	Славя	Славя	Славя	Славя
3	Суперъ Яковъ Яковлевичъ	20.08.1870	Славя	Суперъ	Славя	Славя	Славя	Славя
4	Суперъ Яковъ Яковлевичъ	20.08.1870	Славя	Суперъ	Славя	Славя	Славя	Славя
5	Суперъ Яковъ Яковлевичъ	20.08.1870	Славя	Суперъ	Славя	Славя	Славя	Славя
6	Суперъ Яковъ Яковлевичъ	20.08.1870	Славя	Суперъ	Славя	Славя	Славя	Славя

His tombstone in Korsovka confirms his full name and father's name:



Here is interred
 Our father the
 An honourable man
 The dear, our teacher and Rabbi
 Reb Yaakov Yehoash
 Son of Reb Shmuel
 Super

The nickname "**Havis**" or "**Heibish**" was a derivative of the Hebrew name "**Yehoash**". Since the grandfather of Rabbi Yitskhak Yaakov Super was found from his tombstone to be Yosef-Yehoash, it became apparent that Yaakov-Yehoash and Yosef-Yehoash could not have been brothers as they bore the same name. Jerusalem genealogist the late Rabbi Shmuel Gorr shared his expertise in Jewish name derivatives thereby making a valuable contribute to

Super, it was shown that Shmuel was the primogenitor of all the branches. No record has been found of a "Toviah Davidovich" Super in any documents. Not has his supposed son Yosef-Yehoash been located in the records of Lutzin or Korsovka, although his son "Shmuel Yoselov" (son of Yosef) appears in the 1897 Korsovka census:

1897, KARSAVA
 In Korsovka in the house of Shaula Super lived:
 1) Super Shmul Josselov, 42, born and reg. in Lyutsein, literate in Hebrew, butcher-master
 2) wife Super Haya-Mina Abranowa, 45, born and reg. in Lyutsein, literate in Hebrew, at husband.
 3) son Selick Morduch, 20, born in Lyutsein, literate, learned at house butcher.
 4) son Jossel, 15, literate in Hebrew,
 5) son Hatkel, 11, born in Karnava, illiterate
 6) son Srol, 9, illit.
 7) d. Hassys, 5, illit 8) servante Suchbekowa Shula, 17 & Jelena Gusare
 14 v. o.

click to enlarge

Feigmanis' translation of the original Russian census in Korsovka in 1897.

Yitskhak-Yaakov Super does not appear among the children of Shmuel, either because he was away from home studying, or because he was liable for military service as the second born son.

My original assumption was that Tuviah (supposed father of Yosef-Yehoash) was another brother to Shmuel, Yitskhak (Itzik) and Leib, and that since Tuviah's patronymic was "David" then David was the primogenitor of the family. Furthermore I proposed that the theoretic connection between the Supers of Lutzin and the Sofers of Vilna was that "David" was a son of Uri. This theoretical relationship seemed further strengthened since both Shmuel and Leib had sons called Tuviah, a named repeated in the Vilna family of Soferim.

It must be stated that at the time of the extraction of the Latvian archival material, no evidence was found for the existence of either Tuviah or David. Nor was there documentation that David was a son of Uri Sofer of Vilna. Yet it seemed to me reasonable that the relationships were as above.

In 2003 I acquired the census of the Jewish community in Vilna for the years 1765 and 1784 from David and Sonia Hoffman, founders of the Jewish Family History Foundation. In the 1784 census I identified Uri Sofer as "Uryasz Gabrylowicz" living with his wife Touba (not Leah as claimed by Ginzburg family sources) and a servant Chasia. At that time they had no children.

Handwritten document snippet showing names and dates in Cyrillic script.

A mathematical calculation shows clearly that if Uri did subsequently have a

son David, even if it was in the period immediately following the census in 1784, such a theoretical David could not have fathered sons Shmuel, Yitskhak and Leib, born in the 1790's or the ubiquitous Tuviah born in 1801. Whilst the dates of birth of all of the four Supers "branch heads" has not been found, they were all dead by the time of the 1874 Lutzin census, Shmuel's wife Elka was still alive in 1874 aged eighty. Assuming that Shmuel was at least as old as his wife, he was probably born not later than 1794, when his supposed father David could have been no more than ten years old!

Had the Vilna and Lutzin census been available at the time of writing in 1992 of my book "The Pen and the Blade, Super family", David as a son of Uri, could not have been proposed as the family patriarch.

The problem of locating Yosef-Yehoash Super, so as to establish the identity of his father, is complicated by the fact that he apparently did not live in Lutzin at the time of the 1874 census, although his son Shmuel was born there in 1855. Family tradition conveyed by Rabbi Arthur Saul Super and by his cousin Arthur Super (London) relates that their great-grandfather managed an estate for a local Latvian nobleman. If the location of that estate could be established, records of Yosef-Yehoash might be found. It is possible that he lived in Korsovka until his death that had to be before 1884 when his grandson and namesake Yosef, the son of Shmuel was born. Since the 1874 census of Korsovka is missing, this cannot be verified.

Not only has Yosef-Yehoash not appeared in documentation, aside from his name on his son Shmuel's tombstone, no theoretical siblings bearing the relevant patronymic indicating their father was called Tuviah, have been found. At this stage it appears that the book containing the signature "Toviah Davidovich" was a red herring and that these names may have nothing to do with the Super family, although there may have been such a relative.

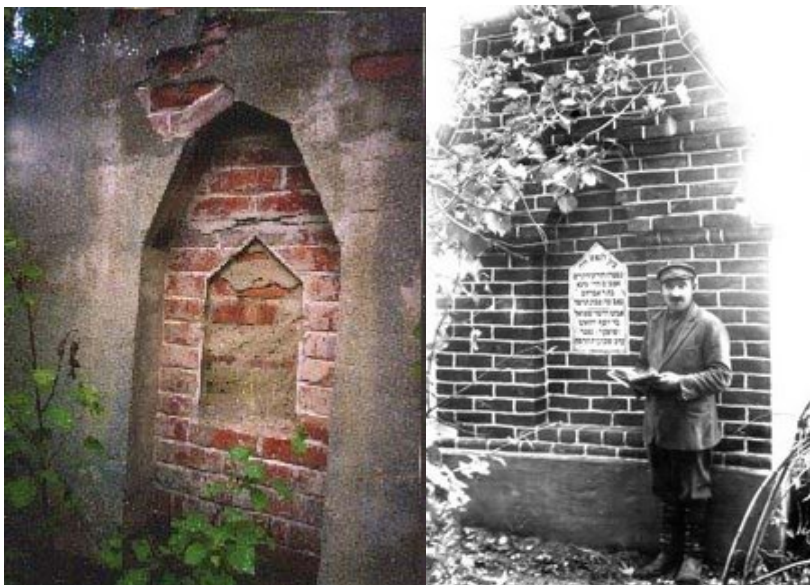
From the available evidence it seems that Yosef-Yehoash was a son of Yitskhak Super, one of the three alcohol traders mentioned in the 1837 litigation in Lutzin. My reason is based on the naming patterns. My wife's grandfather Rabbi Yitskhak-Yaakov Super was given the name Yaakov after his maternal great-grandfather Yaakov Dobrin. It seems likely that the name Yitskhak was given to him after his paternal great-grandfather Yitskhak Super.

In 2003 I ordered further research from Aleksanders Feigmanis in Latvia. He traveled to Karsava (Korsovka) and took about three hundred photographs of the now accessible tombstones in the Jewish cemetery. There are large areas

covered in weeds that may hide other family tombstones.



One of the tombstones, that of Yankel Heibish Super, is shown above. The Ohel (mausoleum) of Shmuel, the son of Yosef-Yehoash Super still stands but the tablet inscribed with the name has been removed, perhaps by the locals in this village where there are no longer any Jews or perhaps during the Nazi invasion in 1941 when nearly all the Jews were killed. Fortunately most of the cemetery survived.



Korsovka, 2003 Korsovka, 1929 with Khatzkel Super
Photographed by Feigmanis

One of the tombstones correlates with Rabbi Yitskhak Yaakov Super's reference to relatives in the letter above:



*The man Shmuel Sholem
Son of Reb Moshe Simkha Super
Died 10th Tevet, 5688 [1927]*

These names appear in various Latvian census records: "Shmuel son of Moshe" Super, born 1846 (lived in Korsovka) appears in a list of people living in 1889 in the rural areas of Lutzin district. This list states that Shmuel Moshev (son of Moshe) came from Lutzin to Korsovka in 1877. His father Moshe son of Yitskhak born 1829 in Lutzin, moved to Korsovka in 1876. Shmuel's son Benyamin Yitskhak, born 1873, appears in the 1897 census in Korsovka. It appears that "Mr. Benjamin Super" referred to in Rabbi Super's letter to his son Arthur, as "Benyamin son of Shmuel-Sholem" was the son of Shmuel-Sholem whose tombstone appears above. Since Rabbi Super states that the relationship was of second cousins, it can be established that Benyamin Super's grandfather Moshe-Simkha was a brother of Rabbi Yitskhak-Yaakov's grandfather Yosef-Yehoash Super. This supports my theory that Rabbi Yitskhak-Yaakov's great-grandfather was Yitskhak Super, one of the four family heads mentioned above.

A key source for the early nineteenth century relationships of the Supers is the census recorded in 1816. This is held by the Belarus State Historical Archive in Minsk. This anomaly is due to the political border changes whereby Lutzin was located in Vitebsk Province under Tsarist government, which province is now part of Belarus. Therefore some records for Lutzin (now Ludza) are held in Riga and some in Minsk.

The following are the key entries. See also attached chart and full family tree.

1816 census:

Fond 2640-1-617-55-55

Family number 28.

Shmuel Gevushevich* Super aged 31 in 1811; 35 in 1816.

Shmuel Gevushevich's sons:

Itsik aged 9 in 1811; 13 in 1816.

Mark aged 2 in 1811; died in 1813.

Leib newborn in 1811; aged 3 in 1816.

Shmuel's son-in-law **Yankel Kufman Sholomovich**, absent in 1811, 18 in 1816.

Shmuel Gevushevich's wife **Brokha** aged 35 in 1816.

Itsik Shmuelovich's wife **Fruma** aged 17 in 1816.

Yankel Kufman's wife **Paika** aged 18 in 1816.

*Shmuel's patronymic Gevushevich is the Russification of the Yiddish name Heibish, equivalent to the Hebrew name Yehoash.

1834 census

Fond 2640-1-617-155-156

Family number 58

Shmuel Gevushevich Super aged 35 in 1816, 53 in 1834.

From Shmuel Gevushevich's first wife, sons:

1. **Itsik** aged 13 in 1816; separated to family number 59 in 1834 list.
2. **Mordkha** not written in 1816, moved to family number 259 in 1826.
3. **Leib** aged 4 in 1816; 20 in 1834.

From Shmuel's second wife **[Elka]** from latter sources sons:

Yankel newborn in 1834; 3 in 1834.

Shmuel's son-in-law **Kifka Sholomovich** 18 in 1816, moved to family number 259 in 1824.

Family number 59:

Itsik Shmuelovich Super previously family number 58.

Aged 31 in 1834.

Itsik's son **Mordukh** newborn in 1816; 14 in 1834.

Itsik's second son **Livsha** [should be **Moshe**] **Simkha** aged 5 in 1834.

Itsik's wife **Fruma** aged 32 in 1834.

Mordukh's wife **Touba** aged 16 in 1834.

Since Shmuel's son **Tuviah (Gutta)** and Itsik's son **Yosef-Yehoash** do not appear in the 1834 census, they must have been born after this date.

From the above it can be seen that the head of the family in 1816 was Shmuel Super, born 1781. His father's name was "Gevush" or Heibish/Yehoash, born probably about 1760.

Shmuel was married twice and the configuration of his sons therefore differs from the original family tree compiled by Norman Super.



click to enlarge

Given that two of Shmuel Super's grandsons were named Tuviah, it would seem that they were named after an earlier ancestor who bore that name. The Riga archive holds lists of Jews living in Lutzin in the 1780's and 1790's. Feigmanis has provided his transcription of these lists, containing about 500 people, the entire Jewish population of Lutzin at the time. Since these lists precede the adoption of surnames that took place in the early nineteenth century, they can only be interpreted by the presence of personal names in an otherwise known family configuration.

The eighteenth century Lutzin list does include two families descended from someone name Toviah:

Високий Бундесові Мовша Тобіашевич - 49 (Сем. 86)
 м. Бейла - 25 (Сем. 86)
 гет: Раран - 20
 м. Довна Мухомова 25
 с. Шер - 15
 Рарань - 7
 Шер - 6
 Лейба - 1
 9. Фрума - 15
 Сара - 10
 Високий Бундесові Хаим Тобіашевич - 49 (Сем. 1794)
 м. Бейла - 25
 9. Рарань - 27 } Сем. 1794
 м. Рива Зинкова - 15
 Михайло - 11
 Раран - 3 - чике 1787
 Сара - 5

Movsha Tobiashevich aged 49 in 1786. (Amongst his sons were Itzik and Leib).
 Khaim Tobiashevich aged 49 in 1794.

Since Movsha was born in 1739, his father "Tobiash" (Tuviah) may have been born about 1710 and could have been an ancestor of the Lutzin Super family.

As a result of the above re-examination of the Super family tree, the first chapter of my book "The Pen and the Blade - Super family" (Petah Tikvah, Israel 1992), entitled "Tracing the Family Tree" pages 2-31 should be deleted. The detailed family tree pages 116-184 has been considerably updated and is available in a separate file.

[1] Latvian State Historical Archive, Riga. Reference 755-1-370-142. Extracted by Aleksanders Feigmanis, Riga, Latvia, 1997
<http://chfreedman.blogspot.com:80/search/label/Pruning%20the%20Super%20Family%20Tree>