

**Stevens Faculty Forum 2/16/2005**

**THREE UNUSUAL JEWS**

**Glueckel of Hameln - A "modern" 17th Century Jewish Woman**

**Boruch Schick of Shklov - An 18th Century Rabbi/Mathematician/Scientist**

**Abraham Kotsuji - A Twentieth Century Japanese Jew**

**L. E. Levine**

**Glueckel of Hameln (1646-1724)**

**<http://home.infionline.net/~ddisse/gluckel.html>**

**The Memoirs of Gluckel of Hameln**

- I. Memoirs give insight into her life and life (particularly Jewish life) during these times. Precarious situation of Jews**
- II. Betrothed at 12, married at 14 to Chaim Segal. Met husband only once. Had 14 children – 12 lived to adulthood; lived in Hamburg**

**From <http://toogoodreports.com/column/reader/berkowitz/05121301.htm>**

A modern feminist, who never met a religious Jewish woman in real life, made the sneering comment: "The claim that ultra-Orthodox Jewish women freely choose to bring 12 children into the world is about as solid as the claim that there are women who freely choose to become prostitutes or paid surrogate mothers. If it were not for their emotional misery and if it were not for the social pressure they are under and the state of abject poverty in which they live, ultra-Orthodox women would not opt for a life of slavery. It is doubtful whether most ever had the opportunity to make any personal choices whatsoever in their lives."

We'll let Glueckel answer that one:

“Every two years I had a baby, I was tormented with worries as everyone is with a little house full of children, G-d be with them! and I thought myself more heavily burdened than anyone else in the world and that no one suffered from their children as much as I. Little I knew, poor fool, how fortunate I was when I seated my children ‘like olive plants round about my table.’”

I couldn't have said it any better myself, but, I only have nine children. L. M. Berkowitz

- III. Husband was business man - jewels, precious metals, she was his full partner. He consulted her in all he did**
- IV. Widowed at 43 – on his death bed asked if he had anything to tell wife, replied Glueckel knows everything**
- V. She took over business, responsible for 8 unmarried children**
- VI. Traveled extensively to fairs for business reasons. Arranged marriages of all but her youngest child**
- VII. Well-educated, both secularly and religiously**
- VIII. Deeply religious**
- IX. Memoirs for her children – teach them 3 things**
  - a. It is useless to ask why G-d allows things to happen as they do.*
  - b. The only solution to man's suffering is trust in God.*
  - c. How her children must live (and how Glueckel has tried to live).*
- X. Shabbatsai Tzvi page 45.**

## **Boruch Schick (1744 – 1808)**

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=343&letter=B>

Russia's First Modern Jews, The Jews of Shklov by D. E. Fishman

- I. Born into respected rabbinic family**
  - a. Received traditional Talmudic education**
  - b. Dayan in Minsk**
- II. Unusual interest in science and mathematics**
  - a. Practitioner of Rabbinic Science – knew Latin**
  - b. Wrote books on anatomy, astronomy, mathematics**
  - c. Incorporated traditional Jewish sources – Kabbalah**
- III. Craving for knowledge led him to leave Russia for West**
  - a. Studied medicine in England**
  - b. His "eneh ha-Middah," on trigonometry (Prague, 1784, and Shklov, 1793), is a translation from the English**
  - c. Was in Berlin in 1776 – came into contact with Western science and math**
  - d. In Jan. 1778 on way back to Poland met with the Vilna Gaon – introduction to his Hebrew translation of Euclid's Elements wrote**

*When I was in the illustrious city of Vilna in the presence of the Rav, the light, the great Gaon, my master and teacher, the light of the eyes of the exile, the renowned pious one [may HaShem protect and save him] Rav Eliyahu, in the month of Teves 5538 [January 1778], I heard from his holy mouth that according to what a person is lacking in knowledge of the "other wisdoms", correspondingly he will be lacking one hundred portions*

*in the wisdom of the Torah, because the Torah and the “other wisdoms” are inextricably linked together ...*

- IV. This statement has been source of much controversy**
  - a. Secular studies and relationship to Torah studies**
  - b. Rabbi B. Schick remained a staunch defender of traditional Judaism**

### **Abraham Kotsuji (1900 – 1974)**

#### **From Tokyo to Jerusalem**

#### **The Autobiography of Japanese Convert to Judaism**

[http://www.aish.com/holocaust/people/The\\_Japanese\\_Convert.asp](http://www.aish.com/holocaust/people/The_Japanese_Convert.asp)

<http://www.ourjerusalem.com/history/story/history20041114.html>

<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1302768/posts>

- I. Born into aristocratic Japanese family, descended from long-line of Shinto priests**
  - a. At 13 visited book shop and discovered Japanese translation of Bible**
  - b. Embraced belief in a single G-d**
  - c. Became a Christian and came to US to study religion**
  - d. Studied Hebrew and Bible. Main interest Tanach**
  - e. Earned doctorate in Hebrew and Judaic studies – returned to Japan 1931, became professor**

- II. Became very interested in “Old Testament” and traditional Judaism**
  - a. Interest in Judaism peaked in 1941 – arrival of European Jewish refugees**
  - b. Mirrer yeshiva – saved by Chiune Sugihara, Japan’s acting consul in Lithuania. Issued 2140 visas**
  - c. Jews came to Kobe – Kotsuji was impressed by teachers and students of the yeshiva**
  - d. Intervened on their behalf and used his government contacts on behalf of Jews**
  
- III. Anti-Semitism in Japan – ally of Germany**
  - a. Kotsuji wrote and spoke publicly on behalf of Jews**
  - b. Warned about this, Arrested in 1942 by the Japanese Bureau of Investigation**
  - c. Interrogated under torture to reveal details of suspected Jewish plot to gain control of world – miraculously rescued**
  - d. In 1959 he converted to Judaism in Israel.** Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz said, "We will never forget what you did for us when we were in Japan." The sage continued. "Nor how you risked your life to save us. The merit of that *mesirus nefesh* [self-sacrifice] is what stood in your stead and led you to seek shelter under the wings of the *Shechina* [Divine presence] and to become a genuine member of the Nation you helped so much."
  - e. Spent final years in Brooklyn, supported by heads of Mirrer yeshiva**
  - f. Funeral attended by many famous rabbis**